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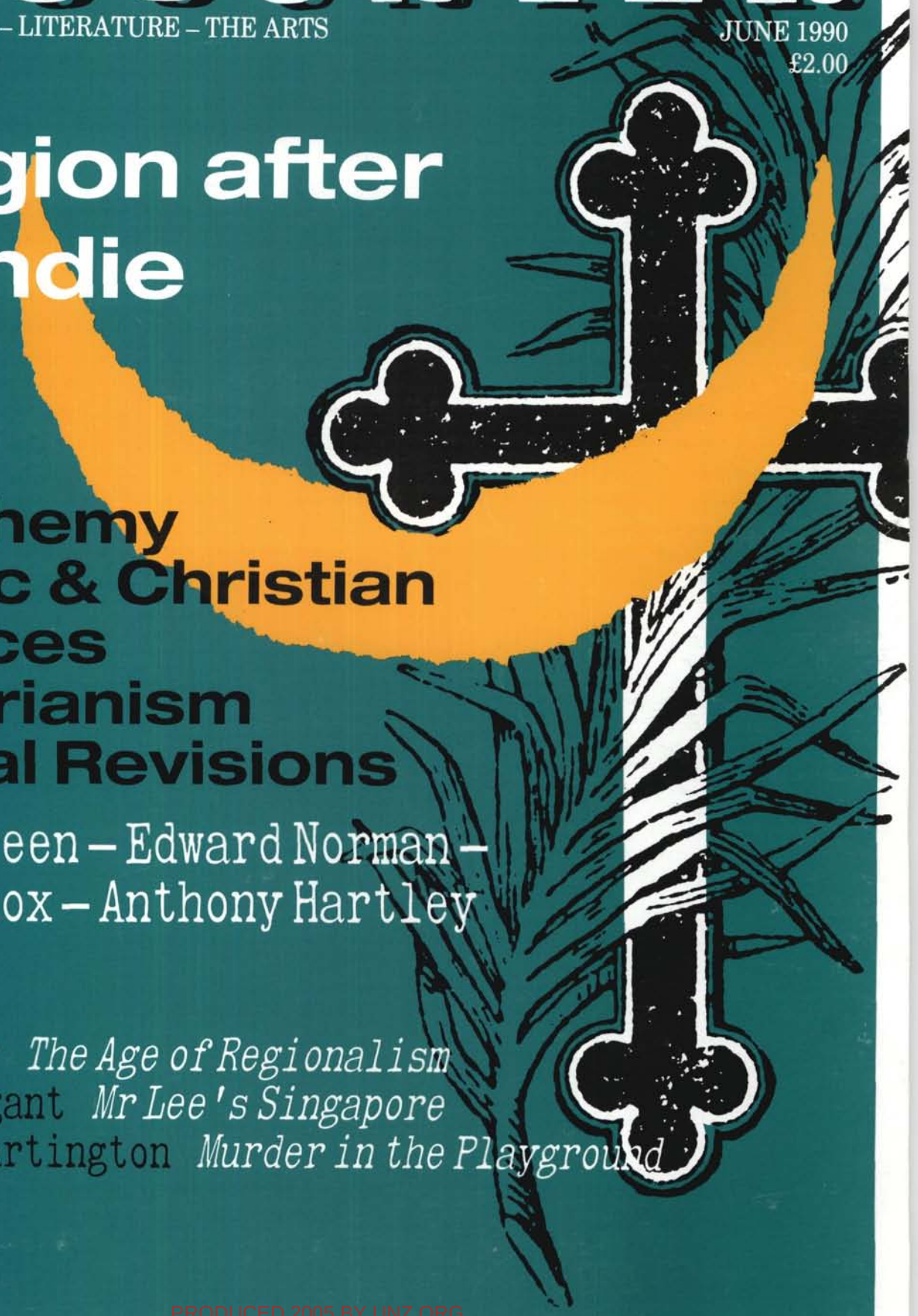

Religion after Rushdie

Blasphemy
Islamic & Christian Alliances
Sectarianism
Biblical Revisions

S.J.D. Green – Edward Norman –
Oliver Knox – Anthony Hartley

W.W. Rostow *The Age of Regionalism*
Robert Elegant *Mr Lee's Singapore*
Geoffrey Partington *Murder in the Playground*

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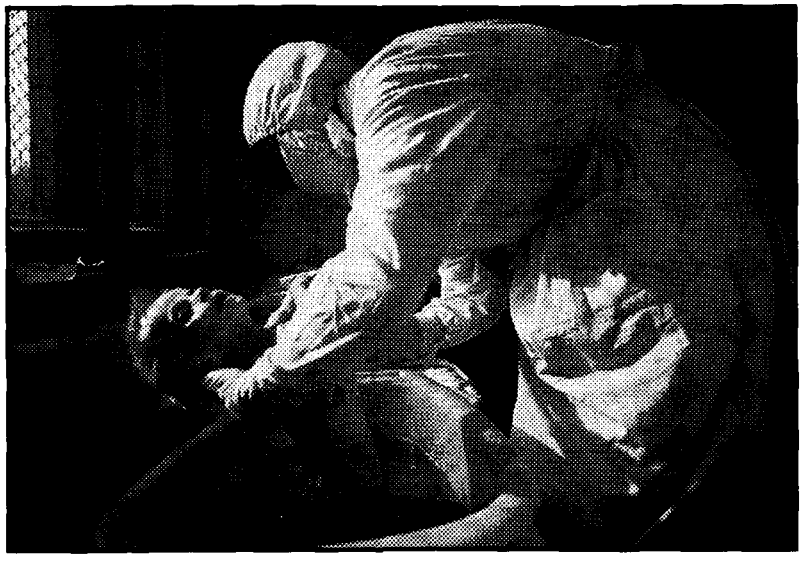
Please help the children of Ceausescu.

The sight is sickening and terrifying. In crib after crib lie babies and toddlers who look like old people, their skin shrivelled, their skeletal faces bearing the unmistakable mark of approaching death. These pitiful children at a clinic in Bucharest are AIDS patients, the tiniest victims of the brutal, backward regime of Romania's fallen dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu.

TIME MAGAZINE 19.2.90.

This is just one aspect of the gruesome legacy of Ceausescu's years of misrule.

Contraception, abortion and sex education were outlawed in Romania in a desperate attempt to boost the workforce.



It resulted in thousands of unwanted children, abandoned by parents who could see no way of supporting them in a country where food of any description was already dreadfully scarce.

Vast numbers of the children now crammed into Romania's 205 orphanages are the survivors of back street operations.

Many are severely handicapped and live in conditions of appalling squalor. Most pitiful of all among these tragic children are those under the age of six who number around 14,000 spread throughout sixty-four orphanages.

(It is estimated that one in four of these children is dying of AIDS.)

There is simply not enough food available to feed any of the children adequately and most suffer from severe malnutrition.

Standards of hygiene are pathetically low due to a lack of proper equipment and facilities.

There is a chronic shortage of staff. By day, there are just four or five nurses for every 100 children and only one doctor and one psychiatrist for every 150-200 children in the orphanages. By night, there are even fewer staff on duty.

Even the most basic essentials such as nappies and plastic sheeting are non-existent, so the children soil the rags they are dressed in and the mattresses of their cots are rotting.

The stench throughout these institutions is overpowering.

Dysentry is common and many of the children suffer from chronic bowel disorders.

Often they are left lying unattended in their own excrement. The most severe cases are kept naked because naked bodies are easier to clean.

How you can help right now.

The Romanian Orphanage Trust was set up by Mary Gibson, a Dorset grandmother, who was so appalled by what she witnessed on a visit to a Romanian orphanage that she vowed to raise £10,000,000 to help ease the suffering and put an end to the misery.

If you will help us right now, we can provide immediate relief for these innocent victims.

There is no bureaucratic red tape to hinder or delay our efforts and no costly overheads to drain away money.

The funds will be used to fly teams of paediatricians and nurses from Britain and to supply basic requirements such as dried milk, food, nappies, plastic sheets and essential medicines.

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I am enclosing a donation of £ ..... to help ease the suffering of Romanian orphans.

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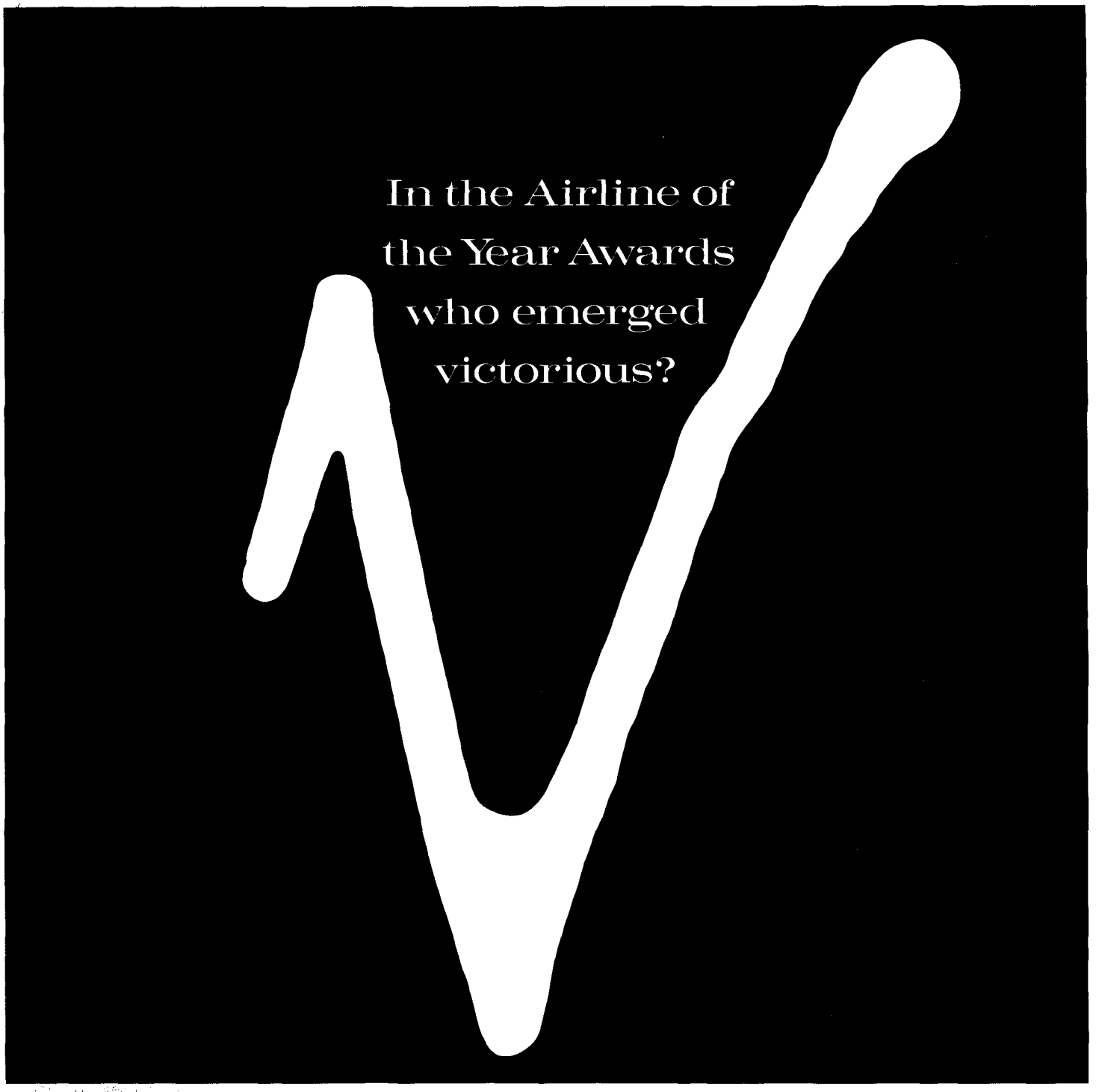

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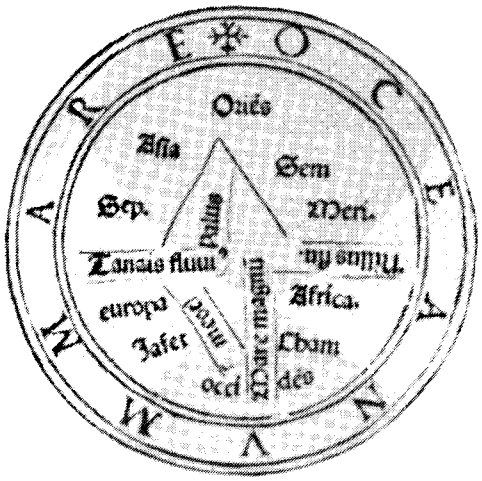
W. W. Rostow

The Coming Age of Regionalism

A "Metaphor" for our Time?



THE problem which has been posed is to find "an appropriate metaphor for our time". I was, for a period, uncertain of my answer. After toying with a series of possibilities, my reflections came to rest on four authentic major forces shaping the present and future of our societies. But none could properly be called dominant. None constituted a single "image" or "metaphor" which satisfied the criteria: it had to relate to the other major dynamic forces in a significant way; to suggest useful directions of action or policy; and to be sufficiently credible to avoid the charge of utopianism. It was the application of these criteria that finally yielded the fifth formulation, which met my criteria to a sufficient degree to justify entering it in "the Metaphor Sweepstakes".

(1) My first candidate was **The Age of the Fourth Technological Revolution.** Evidently one of the most powerful forces at work in the world is the group of technologies which moved from invention to innovation in, roughly, the mid-1970s. This group embraces micro-electronics, genetic engineering, the ubiquitous laser, and a range of new industrial materials. One of its results is a remarkable revolution in communications. For reasons that need not concern us, there has been a tendency over the past two centuries for major innovations to cluster. These clusters were: in the 1780s, Watt's improved steam engine, power-driven textile machinery, and Cort's method for fabricating good iron from coke rather than charcoal; then, starting in the 1830s, came the railroad-steel complex which dominated the next half-century or so; straddling the turn of the century, electricity, the internal combustion engine and a new batch of sophisticated chemicals moved on stage. In its various elaborations this cluster did not decelerate until the mid-1960s, although continuity was broken by the Great Depression and, to a degree, accelerated by World War II.

As for the present technological revolution: its unique links to areas of basic science which themselves are experiencing revolutionary development, the extraordinary diversification of each of its components, and its applicability to virtually all economic sectors may render it even more powerful than its three predecessors. If it sustains the historical rhythm of such revolutions, it may well continue to unfold and shape our societies down to the middle of the next century.

(2) The second metaphor candidate was **The Age of the New Tigers**: that is, the foreseeable emergence as technologically mature societies of a formidable group, including not only South Korea and Taiwan, but India and China, Brazil and Mexico, and a good many others in Asia, Latin America, and even the Middle East if that region can make its way to an approximation of peace. A good deal of modern history is taken up with the profound effects of this kind of transition on the world economy, politics, diplomacy, and war: for example, when the United States, France, and Germany joined Great Britain as technologically mature societies; and then when Japan and Russia joined the Atlantic states in command over then existing technologies. An age of nuclear weapons can not afford the brutal and graceless adjustments symbolised by the two World Wars and the Cold War. The global community clearly must try to do better in bringing the foreseeable newcomers into the rights and responsibilities that go with technological maturity.

(3) The third candidate was **The Age of Environmental Threat**: that is, the struggle, just beginning, to preserve a viable habitat for humanity in the face of the surge of population and industrialisation apparently on the cards over the coming decades.

Quite aside from the shameful deterioration of lakes and rivers, oceans, seas, and beaches by short-sighted policies, four major forms of environmental degradation may be

WALT ROSTOW, *Professor of Economics and History at the University of Texas at Austin, was National Security Adviser in Washington under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. He is the author of many books, including "The Stages of Economic Growth" (1960) and "Pre-Invasion Bombing Strategy" (1981). His most recent work, "Theorists of Economic Growth from David Hume to the Present, with a Perspective on the Next Century", was published in May by Oxford University Press.*

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under way: the attenuation of the Ozone Layer; and elevation of temperatures brought about by the Greenhouse Effect, with possibly important net negative consequences for the food supply; the progressive destruction of forests from Acid Rain and other causes; and the consequences for human beings of increasing concentrations of harmful chemicals in the environment. In no case has scientific knowledge permitted firm predictions of the pace of deterioration, or the timing of acute regional or even global crises. Nevertheless, even temperate analyses suggest that net deterioration in the environment continues in all these dimensions.

Despite the lack of an adequate understanding of degenerative environmental processes, a *prima facie* case exists for taking these problems very seriously indeed. Rightly or wrongly, global population is estimated by the United Nations and the World Bank to rise between 1984 and 2025 from 4.75 billion to 8.30 billion. Of this increase, 95% will occur in the developing continents where the major expansion of industry and energy consumption will also take place. One cannot help but conclude that it will require much greater forehandedness, technological ingenuity, resources, and international cooperation than the human race has yet mustered to weather successfully the foreseeable further strains on the environment.

(4) The fourth possibility was, simply, **The Decline and Fall of the Cold War.** It is, of course, a rather precarious historical process, not an event. If the past teaches us anything, it is that history is never linear; there will be setbacks (like the current retrogression of China). Nevertheless, a number of relatively independent forces are at work, gradually, sporadically, but relentlessly rendering the Cold War an irrational framework for the policy of the Soviet Union or, indeed, for any other government. These forces include the three other candidates for reigning metaphor. For example, "the Fourth Technological Revolution" is proving difficult for socialist societies to grasp. Their institutions lack incentives to innovate—a quite serious matter in a world of rapid technological change which often yields a 30% per annum obsolescence rate.

Although all the evidence is not yet in, history may have rendered a verdict on John Stuart Mill's assertion that, in the test between Socialism and Capitalism, the choice would, in the end, hinge on "which of the two systems is consistent with the greatest amount of human liberty and spontaneity."[1] The character of the Fourth Technological Revolution has forced this issue towards decision. Although Karl Marx despised John Stuart Mill, present circumstances suggest that Mikhail Gorbachov was correct to take Mill seriously and link *glasnost* with *perestroika*.

Similarly, Moscow has been shaken by a gathering awareness that economic and technological capacity, backed by nationalism, diffuses power rapidly in the global community and renders the notion of domination by any one country an increasingly impossible dream. This perception was sharpened, in particular, by the recent movement of Japan from third to second economic power in the world, and by the momentum of China, India, and other late-comers evidently on the road to technological maturity.

Finally, the Soviet government began to acknowledge to itself, its citizens, and the world the scale of the environmental degradation which had been permitted to develop in that country. Soviet scientists at international gatherings began to assert quite openly that problems in the global environment belong high on the international agenda, and that the Soviet Union was prepared to join others in dealing with such problems in a thoroughly un-ideological way.

THESE, THEN, were my four initial possibilities: a powerful and pervasive technological revolution; the impending movement of a new group of societies to mature power status (including the two most populous, India and China); the challenge posed by a deteriorating global physical environment; and the beginning, at least, of the disintegration of the Cold War as the framework for relations among nation-states.

Simply to list them suggests why I had to search for a unifying fifth; after all, I was asked to find one metaphor, not four. Out of the mists finally emerged such a unifying theme: **The Coming Age of Regionalism**. The reason for its emergence was, I think, simple. As I contemplated the forces at work in the four other metaphors and the policies required to maximise the chance of constructive outcomes, it became clear that while all had global implications, intense regional as well as global cooperation would be required. Something essential seemed missing between a United Nations organisation in New York and nation-states incapable of shaping their destinies in a highly dynamic, interdependent world.

In short, I concluded that the political structure of the global community would require greatly strengthened regional institutions if we are to deal successfully with the agenda history has set for, say, the next half-century. But what is the relationship between regional structures (or the elaboration of existing structures) and the task of taming the four basic forces loose in the world? I start with the great task of bringing the Cold War to a soft landing—to a peaceful resolution.

THE ENDING OF THE COLD WAR requires the defusing of regional confrontations in the Caribbean, the Middle East, South and South-east Asia, and Africa; strategic arms-control agreements; and a European settlement. The latter is, I would guess, the most important because it will require important arms-control measures and make easier the settlement of several critical regional conflicts.

The Cold War started—and I suspect it will end—in Europe. Its conclusion poses several grand problems:

(1) The freeing of the countries of Eastern Europe to make their own political and economic dispositions, including non-military association with Western Europe.

(2) Assuring that such reorientation will not threaten the

[1] J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, ed. J. M. Robson (University of Toronto Press, 1965), p.208.

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military security of the Soviet Union, the United States, or the peace of Europe itself. This process will require the conversion of NATO and the Warsaw Pact into arms-control negotiating and supervising bodies—a kind of regional Security Council for Europe.

(3) A settlement of the question of German reunification. I believe it would be wise for Germans and others to leave the question of German unity for the end of the process. Approached head-on now, the issue is likely to prove so contentious that it could obstruct not only the ending of the division of Europe and the substitution of arms-control for military confrontation, but also the movement towards Western European unity. A consensus on German unity is much more likely to emerge when a great East-West democratic Europe exists under arms-control agreements secure for all concerned, and at least one more generation separates us from 1945.

For purposes of my present argument, however, the point is, simply, that the remaking of Europe is likely to require regional economic arrangements associating East and West Europe, as well as a strong and reliable arms-control régime in which both the United States and the Soviet Union would participate.

New technologies have had a kind of domino effect on regional organisation. I believe it is fair to say that they are the rocket fuel for the second-stage booster of Western Europe towards unity, symbolised by 1992. Look back, for a moment, to the early 1980s. These were the days of Euro-pessimism. A cover-story of *Newsweek* early in 1984 was devoted to the European sense that the region was falling hopelessly behind the United States and Japan in generating and applying the new technologies. President Mitterrand returned from a West Coast trip to Silicon Valley asking how France—quite comfortable since Colbert with large, set-

John Stuart Mill's Prediction (1852)

THE "FATAL CONTRAST" to which Professor Rostow calls our attention in a passing reference is one of the most astonishing passages in modern political literature. It is, in its way, a confrontation of "Mill v. Marx" on the subject of the final conflict between Bourgeois Democracy and Communism, between Capitalism and Socialism, between an Open and a Closed Society. And it was prophetically formulated in the year 1852, almost a century-and-a-half before it became the conventional wisdom in Central and Eastern Europe from Moscow and Budapest to Prague and East Berlin.

The passage is to be found in John Stuart Mill's "Principles of Political Economy, with some of their Applications to Social Philosophy". The book was first published in two volumes in London in 1848, but the section on Communism (Book II, ch. I, section 3) was recast in its present form in his revision for the third edition of 1852. Like all good liberals, he hesitated, reconsidered, revised, giving the impression of dithering all the way; but then no man is a prophet in his own century.

M.J.L.

. . . THE QUESTION *of Socialism is not, as generally stated by Socialists, a question of flying to the sole refuge against the evils which now bear down humanity; but a mere question of comparative advantages, which futurity must determine. We are too ignorant either of what individual agency in its best form, or Socialism in its best form can accomplish, to be qualified to decide which of the two will be the ultimate form of human society.*

IF A CONJECTURE may be hazarded, the decision will probably depend mainly on one consideration, viz. which of the two systems is consistent with the greatest amount of human liberty and spontaneity. After the means of subsistence are assured, the next in strength of the personal wants of human beings is liberty; and (unlike the physical wants, which as civilization advances become more moderate and more amenable to control) it increases instead of diminishing in intensity as the intelligence and the moral faculties are more developed. The perfection both of social arrangements and of practical morality would be, to secure to all persons complete independence and freedom of action, subject to no restriction but that of not doing injury to others: and the education which taught or the social institutions which required them to exchange the control of their own actions for any amount of comfort or affluence, or to renounce liberty for the sake of equality, would deprive them of one of the most elevated characteristics of human nature. It remains to be discovered how far the preservation of this characteristic would be found compatible with the Communistic organization of society. . . .

BUT IT IS NOT *by comparison with the present [1852] bad state of society that the claims of Communism can be estimated; nor is it sufficient that it should promise greater personal and mental freedom than is now enjoyed by those who have not enough of either to deserve the name. The question is, whether there would be any asylum left for individuality of character; whether public opinion would not be a tyrannical yoke; whether the absolute dependence of each on all, and surveillance of each by all, would not grind all down into a tame uniformity of thoughts, feelings, and actions. . . .*

NO SOCIETY in which eccentricity is a matter of reproach can be in a wholesome state. It is yet to be ascertained whether the Communistic scheme would be consistent with [favourable to] that multiform development of human nature, those manifold unlikenesses, that diversity of tastes and talents, and variety of intellectual points of view, which not only form a great part of the interest of human life, but by bringing intellects into stimulating collision, and by presenting to each innumerable notions that he would not have conceived of himself, are the mainspring of mental and moral progression.

John Stuart Mill

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piece government-run engineering projects—could duplicate the wild, fragmented, creative frenzy he observed in California. The British created a Committee of University Vice-Chancellors to recommend more fruitful relations between the universities and private industry. A sense that more complete Western European economic unity was needed—including much larger Research and Development concentrations—came to suffuse the establishments in Brussels. And so the goals for 1992 were set and European industrial firms, banks, and governments began to act as if it were really going to happen; so also did American and Japanese firms interested in the European market.

All this had quite a lot to do with the US-Canadian economic agreement and the current seriousness of the movement to organise "the Pacific Basin" after a quarter-century of rather wordy and sterile round-table symposia held in charming places throughout the region.

There is an element of caricature in my stylised portrait; but it does seem to be the case that the pace of Japan and the United States in creating and absorbing the Fourth Technological Revolution spurred Europe to set high targets for 1992. The image of 1992, in turn, helped create the US-Canadian economic agreement. Both developments generated a new urgency about a Pacific Basin organisation in Tokyo, Washington, Seoul, Canberra, and elsewhere. And, to complete the circle, a certain amount of alarm arose from Brussels when Europe was excluded from the Brunei talks on the Pacific Basin which took place early last summer.

Although the results may prove salutary, the competitive moods and attitudes generated in this sequence may have been overdone. Competition, including inter-regional competition, will surely persist; but I am inclined to believe there will be no "Fortress Europe" or "Fortress North America" or "Fortress of the Pacific Basin"—not only because of the globalisation of movements of capital and communications, but because of the highly diversified character of the new technologies. No one country is going to dominate as Great Britain dominated the early phase of factory-manufactured cotton textiles and the United States dominated the early phase of the mass automobile. The rapidly expanding volume of high-tech foreign trade and transnational production deals already attests to this proposition. As the United States, Japan, and Western Europe move towards approximate equivalence in high tech, I suspect the judgment of Takuma Yamamoto, President of Fujitsu Ltd., will prevail: "We are entering an era of cooperation because we all have to. . ." (*New York Times*, 23 June 1989). And before long that cooperation will have to adjust to embrace the high-tech giants of the new technologically mature societies, as is already beginning to happen with some of the great South Korean multinational corporations. Nevertheless, regionalism may relate in two helpful ways to the new technologies.

(1) First, it may help move Latin America towards an economic unity long sought but further from reality now than it was a quarter-century ago. With the exception of Brazil and Mexico, its countries are too small to generate the critical mass of scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs to play the creative role in high tech of which their most talented men and women are capable. In a sense, most of Latin America suffers from a more acute version of the problem which has helped drive Western Europe toward the higher degree of unity now being attempted.

(2) The kind of regional organisation required for the Pacific Basin, or which may be revived in the Western Hemisphere, is quite different from that envisaged for Western Europe for 1992. The latter is a grouping of societies at roughly similar stages of growth and technological virtuosity. Organisations for the Pacific Basin and the Western Hemisphere must embrace and meet the interests of countries at quite different stages of growth. One essential function of such multi-stage organisations will surely be to help build up the technological absorptive capacity of the less developed countries of their regions and accelerate the efficient application of the new technologies where relevant. Indeed, a similar process might emerge—as now appears possible and practical—if organised economic links should be built between Western and Eastern Europe.

NOW A QUITE DIFFERENT, potentially helpful linkage: the possible role of regional organisations in rendering constructive the transition of the major countries now on the march to technological maturity. Take China, for example. The Chinese government has given a great deal of thought over recent years to a Pacific Basin organisation. Its interest in participation is suggested by its agreement that Taiwan would also be a member, as is already the case in the Asian Development Bank where both governments are represented. Over the long pull there are few courses of action more likely to assist a peaceful process of mutual adjustment between China and the rest of the Pacific Basin Community than the patient build-up, on both sides, of the habits of principled economic cooperation in an organisation containing and respecting the interests of powers great and small.

India, for the time being, has its own high-priority task of regional organisation to accomplish; that is, bringing fully to life the Organisation of South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC). The organisation was formally created at a meeting on 1-2 August 1983, climaxing seven years of quiet intergovernmental study and working-level negotiation. The founding documents were signed by Foreign Secretaries representing seven governments in the subcontinent (Bangladesh, Butan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka). Evidently, India alone can not bring about the economic and political cooperation SARC mandates. Nevertheless, India—containing about three-quarters of the subcontinent's population and an even larger proportion of its industry and technological capacity—is the key to success. But success requires a new consensus within India's political leadership that peaceful and cooperative relations among the states of the subcontinent are a vital condition for the full and satisfactory modernisation of Indian society. The creation of SARC in 1983 indicates that the concept has a certain reality in Indian life—though the limited and sporadic progress since then suggests that it has not yet come to dominate Indian policy. It may be useful to recall that it took the United States quite a long time to learn a similar lesson with respect to Canada and Mexico.

In the Western Hemisphere the policies and habits of

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economic cooperation have weakened since the 1960s, but institutional bases for a revival exist in the Organisation of American States and the Inter-American Development Bank. Evidently, there can not (and should not) be a nostalgic return to the old "Alliance for Progress". But an ample agenda for hemispheric cooperation exists with respect to debts and trade, the build-up of Latin American technological absorptive capacity, the movements towards Latin American economic unity, and hemispheric environmental problems.

THIS BRINGS ME to the linkage of Regionalism and the task of containing and rolling back environmental degradation. At first sight, environmental problems appear, *par excellence*, to require sustained action at the global level; notably the attenuation of the Ozone Layer and the build up of CO_2 with its believed linkage to the Greenhouse Effect. And it is certainly the case that global analyses and policies are required in certain important areas. But a new United Nations specialised agency for the environment, as some propose, could not implement global policy on its own. It could set broad policy-objectives, and report what individual countries and regions were (and were not) doing; it could supply technical expertise where needed and otherwise cooperate in national and regional efforts. But there is a much better chance of effective action if these essentially household tasks are approached on a neighbourly regional basis. Some progress, for example, has been made on a "neighbourhood basis" between the United States and Canada on Acid Rain—which was not likely in response, say, to a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly. Similarly, a Western Hemisphere organisation (probably with assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank) is more likely to help Brazil deal with the Amazon problem—and a European organisation to be more effective than a global organisation in dealing with the scandalous state of that region's waterways.

THESE ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES are meant, then, to suggest that the elaboration and strengthening of regional organisations in the years ahead might contribute a useful (and perhaps critical) dimension to the solution of the major global problems which initially emerged as candidates for a reigning metaphor. But is this a realistic vision? Is it likely to happen? A mildly optimistic response would be that we have been talking prose for quite a long time—since the first United Nations regional economic commissions were set in motion and the Marshall Plan organisation created in Paris in 1947. Forty-odd years later, the array of "regional" and "sub-regional" organisations in existence is now quite long.

I was requested to write an autobiographical note for the 50th reunion of my class at Yale, and in it I included this passage, after noting my recurrent connection with work on Regionalism in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia:

> "The reasons for the regional impulse in each case are, in the end, quite similar: the inadequacy of the nation-state to handle by itself the complex economic and technological interdependencies of the contemporary world; the difficulties of generating practical cooperation among the 159 governments of the global community; the need to balance the power of a hostile, or potentially hostile, large country; the need felt by the smaller countries to hold in check a generally friendly, larger country of the region; the desire of the United States to withdraw, in degree, but to do so in a setting of order. The regional impulse has certainly not triumphed, but it has stubbornly continued to assert itself in a world still, on balance, dominated by raw nationalism. In any case, regionalism has been an interesting phenomenon to follow for forty years. . . ."

Of course, only a few of these organisations have proved to be influential for substantial periods: notably, the European Community, NATO, OECD, the three regional Development Banks, and ASEAN. Put another way, the regional institutions, at their present level of political support and vitality, can not be expected to play the serious role I am assigning to them. A great deal of creative architecture and construction will be required if my metaphor is to be vindicated.

Contemporary events have provided striking reaffirmation of the strength and viability of Western concepts of human freedom, competitive private enterprise, and representative democracy. Since 1914 these ideas have been on the defensive, explicitly challenged by one alleged "wave of the future" or another. Their reasserted vitality is a source of satisfaction among those who believe in these concepts. But this circumstance does not, in itself, guarantee that humankind will successfully manage the agenda it confronts. It is, in fact, not difficult to write a scenario where the outcome of the four powerful forces I have identified would be not "a federal pattern of regional and global cooperation", but fragmentation, violence, and stagnation. At best, there will be, as always, surprises and set-backs.

Looking ahead to the middle of the next century, I think of a passage from *The Iliad*:

> *All on a razor's edge it stands,*
> *either woeful ruin or life. . . .*

That has been a metaphor for the human condition since Adam and Eve were shunted out of the Garden of Eden. Nevertheless, it still applies.

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Two Stories by Nabil Naoum

Bird Mountain

In the middle of the summer the architect Maurice Banoub came across an undated document relating to a burial ground that had been bought and erected by his great-grandfather and his brother. The beautiful calligraphy in which it had been written, and the contractor's ornamental seal at the bottom of the page, together with the feel of the brittle yellow paper, evoked his delight. In addition, the name of the place made a special impression on him, for the agreement stated that the burial ground was in Bird Mountain, at a place known as Angel Monastery, and that "the extent of the crypt should be three metres by three metres and that it should be of extremely fine workmanship".

Owing to Maurice's infatuation with the past and family history on the one hand, and on the other with the field of architecture, and both being represented in this document, he decided to make a journey to the district of Sohag from where his father's family was descended. He had long been cut off from news of them and he hoped that he might find his way to the burial ground, and so perform the duty of paying a visit to his forebears, or that he might well come across some relative who was still living there.

At Sohag, Maurice hired a private car to take him to a ferry that made the journey twice a day to the other bank. Following the advice of someone knowledgeable, he found a boy who took him to the house of his father, a tailor who still employed his toes when cutting out a garment.

It was after a difficult journey by donkey that he and the father arrived at the heights of the eastern mountain, where a monk received them at the first alleyway leading to the Angel Monastery on Bird Mountain. Here flocks of cranes would put down at the time of their return from their winter migration.

Maurice went up with the monk along a twisting pathway that hung perilously over the mountain's edge. They reached a gateway in a high wall built with great constructional skill from unbaked bricks. Inside the monastery a number of cells were arranged in rows, all surrounding a large courtyard. Behind a small church were several tombs with high stone chambers and with figurines of the local angel set above the doors.

After a long period of waiting in the reception hall, an elderly monk approached and introduced himself as the head of the monastery. After greeting him—for he had learnt his name from the other monk who had accompanied him—Maurice first of all went with him on a visit to the church in order to say a prayer for the souls of his forebears. The monk took him to one of the tombs whose outer covering was made of white marble and over whose vast iron gateway was a delicately wrought statue of an angel about to ascend to the heavens. Behind the gateway Maurice saw a small garden with a fountain in the centre; though it had been neglected for many years, its mosaic work was still bright and beautiful. Around the enclosure could be seen three spacious rooms, and at the bottom of one of them was the crypt specified in the document. When Maurice expressed a desire to go into the tomb, the head of the monastery informed him that it was padlocked and that the key was with Gabriel Effendi, its owner.

"Your relative—and you don't know him?" the elderly monk teased him. After he had said a blessing for Maurice and his deceased relatives, the monk informed him that he would be able to meet Gabriel Effendi by taking himself any weekday to the Boursa Café at Sohag's railway station.

And so it was that Maurice easily found Gabriel Effendi on arriving at the Boursa Café.

"It's incredible", said his relative. He was an elderly man with crumbling teeth and twisted features. From the ancient overcoat in which he was enveloped on that scorching day in August there emanated a repulsive smell.

At Gabriel Effendi's insistence, Maurice reluctantly agreed to spend the night at his house. That evening the two cousins sat on the great balcony that overlooked the river in the fine palace which, as Gabriel informed him, had been the property of the forebears of their respective fathers for such a long time.

"Hanna and Ishaq and Ibrahim and Samaan and Katrina and Shagara and Haniyya and Shalomet and Mathias and Bishara—all of whom have died", said Gabriel to Maurice, examining him from behind his thick glasses that made things look like flat coloured surfaces. "As for those at the monastery", he continued with a cough, "they are saints, they have put two relatives in touch with each other."

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Thus did Maurice return home from his journey to Sohag full of apprehensive thoughts, pursued by all kinds of imaginings. "While the tomb is wonderful, the palace is a real dream." His mind began working quickly. "And this senile man Gabriel, so difficult to approach because of his loathsome smell and repellent appearance, has only one foot in life and the other in the next world. After his death, seeing that he has no son or daughter or family, to whom will this palace and estate go?" Perhaps this piece of paper that had come to him so unexpectedly, showing him the way to a forgotten tomb, was really the key to an immense fortune which might have slipped through his hands had it not been for this pure coincidence.

On his return to Cairo, Maurice searched among his father's papers in the drawers in which he kept some of the photographs he had inherited. He tried to tie things together, to solve the mysteries of the family tree, but he came across no document relating to land or property apart from some ancient files containing various accounts, notebooks and medical prescriptions dating back to the time of his grandfather.

The image of the palace with its wide marble-floored balcony looking over the river, and the vast green fields that spread out on every side, continued to inhabit Maurice's imagination. There was no reason for disquiet about this fortune, for he seemed to be the sole heir, unless some third person were to make an appearance or Gabriel were to marry.

BEFORE three days had gone by Maurice had returned to his relative Gabriel Effendi on the pretext of presenting him with some photographs relating to the family.

Maurice spent a week staying with Gabriel Effendi at the palace, going with him each morning on foot under the scorching sun to the café. It was here that trucks would deliver their loads of different makes of cigarettes. Gabriel Effendi, who was the agent in Upper Egypt for several cigarette companies, would go through numerous inventories in the names of shopkeepers in the towns and villages: the quantities, the amounts sold, expenditures, monies given as security, monies borrowed, amounts paid, and the like. And when the time for lunch came round, Gabriel Effendi would order a quick meal of beans and *falafel* sandwiches from a cart nearby the café, after which they would drink their only cup of tea for the whole day. At night, the two of them would return to the palace to be eaten by mosquitoes, for the netting that used to keep them out in olden times had come to pieces. The greater part of the evening and night Maurice would spend reading the papers and parts of the Gospels to Gabriel Effendi by the faint light of a lamp.

They did not exchange any conversation about personal matters. Gabriel Effendi did not ask him about his work, his family, or his life in Cairo, about what he felt or what his ambitions were. Likewise, Maurice tried to refrain from asking any questions or showing any surprise.

At the beginning of the second week, there was such an increase in the heat that the walk between the palace and the café seemed even longer, and Maurice felt a slight vertigo and a certain stomach upset. This he attributed to the poor diet he was having and to lack of sleep. On the final day of the same week he was unable to go with his relative to the café and took to his bed with a fever.

Gabriel Effendi was extremely distressed at his relative falling ill and he returned before midday with the district's leading doctor who gave Maurice a thorough examination. On leaving, the doctor advised him of the necessity for keeping to his bed for several weeks.

FOR MAURICE the days passed as if they were months. Whenever he came out of the grip of the fever and recollected where he was, he would be seized with regret at having made this ill-omened visit to remote parts where the sun beat down and the flies had the upper hand of humans. Were it not for Gabriel's affection and concern, he would have died in that god-forsaken place where his unknown forebears had dwelt. "God curse my stupidity", Maurice secretly said to himself whenever he recollected his flat in Cairo and his evenings with his friends at the club.

At the start of the third month, as the doctor had expected, the intensity of the illness decreased and Maurice's temperature dropped. Gradually he began to get his appetite back for the food that Gabriel Effendi was cooking with the assistance of a young woman of pleasing appearance. Maurice had first become aware of her on that day when he had heard the doctor addressing her with the words, "Our young architect still needs at least another week of rest, Madame Widad."

When he had completely recovered and was once again sitting with Gabriel Effendi on the balcony, Madame Widad would sit with them. She was showing the first signs of pregnancy from her loving husband, who had married her because of the devotion and unselfishness she had shown from the very moment she began to nurse his cousin.

Before the passing of two months after his complete recovery, there was performed at the Angel Monastery the burial service for Madame Widad. She had passed away, together with her unborn child, after a swift illness which the doctors had been unable to diagnose. How bitterly did Gabriel Effendi weep on the shoulder of his cousin the architect Maurice Banoub, his sole heir, as they stood inside the crypt which measured three metres by three metres and was of extremely fine workmanship.

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The Thousandth Journey

On my thousandth journey into the desert I pitched my tent close by a spring belonging to some Bedouin I had known since my childhood. On a semi-moonlit night I went up the gentle slope of the mountain till I came to a circular place from where I could see the valley. I gazed at the distant stars for a while, after which I went down to Hasan al-Qureishi, the Sheikh of the tribe and my spiritual guide. He was at the time drinking tea in front of his tent. It is to him I have recourse when my soul yearns for its unique origin.

"Free me today", I said to him. He was always promising to free me to the utmost limit, so long as I had no fear, that my vision did not stray and that I was not scared by fantasies.

"Let us wait two nights and on the third I shall free you", he informed me as was his wont each time. Smiling, he showed his broken teeth and a tongue cracked by dryness.

On the third night I went to him that he might carry out his promise. When he saw me he asked me how much water I had drunk and I answered him, and what was the most recent food I had eaten and I informed him. He shook his head disapprovingly:

"Bully-beef?" He laughed and gave me some dried dates. He advised me to go on living in solitude in my place on the mountain and to bathe at dawn and in the evening.

He struck the ground with his hand and brought forth a beetle. He handed it to me and enjoined me to commune with it during my period of solitude, until the time for making my departure.

From on top of the mountain, within the circle assigned to me by my Sheikh, I went on following the beetle wherever it went, and when it had almost disappeared I would bring it back to my side. I did not sleep lest it make its escape, and not for an instance did I take my eyes off it.

"O lovely beetle, you will spend only one more night away from home and then I shall return you to your children, and to your husband or wife. Do not be in such a panic. Through you my soul may be liberated from the desire for the perception of a divine secret which, without you, it is not within my capacity to attain."

It never conversed with me and paid no attention. All that concerned it was to run away and escape.

On the third night I returned to the Sheikh, together with the gift he had made me. He planted it back in the ground from where he had extracted it and asked me: "Did you eat the dates?"

"All of them."

"And it?"

"What?"

"The beetle."

"Does it eat dates?"

"Do I leave it with you for you to deprive it and starve it? You will have no release unless you compensate for that."

"As you say."

Sheikh Hasan gave his suppressed laugh and with his body leaned across a nearby rock and produced a mouse, which he gently held out to me. When signs of fear and disgust showed on my face, he turned his head away, with his hand still outstretched, so I took it. He made me promise to show it affection, also a willingness to comply with its wishes, and not to deprive it of food—and he supplied me with a small piece of bread and a cupful of milk.

Enclosing it in the palm of my hand, I returned to my place. I could feel it trying to slip out as it attempted to gnaw at my timorous fingers. I did not dare to allow it its freedom as it might dart away from me. I grasped hold of it and asked it to be kind to me, for it was the instrument of my release. With one hand I started to crumble the bread for it, and while it lay under my other hand I brought some crumbs close up to it, but it would not eat. All it did was to struggle frantically to escape.

I put the milk down for it, having denied myself, for I would not drink of it should it have tasted it. It sniffed at it but abstained, thus depriving me, though without itself having drunk.

On the third night I was tortured by drowsiness, so I decided to dig a hollow of a suitable size and place it there, shielding it with my chest and praying that it might not escape. Its head with its whiskers tormented me and I was upset by the swinging motion of its tail. Eventually I dozed off. At dawn I found it a lifeless corpse. Sorrowfully, I buried it and returned to my Sheikh and recounted my story to him. He frowned and mumbled to himself. I sensed that he was on the point of dismissing me, for I had starved the beetle and stifled the mouse. And now?

"And now?" I asked him.

"Do you still wish to be freed?"

"Forgive me, for I am a city-dweller and have no such know-how."

"Never mind", he said to me, for he loved me dearly. He got up and came back with a gecko, or perhaps it was a chameleon, twice the size of the mouse, with five fingers ending in circular pads.

"Take it and take care of it. Don't let it infatuate you and don't slay it. It will not run away and it has eaten its fill for months to come. Gather it up to your-

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self, enjoy its company, and may you be successful. Don't talk too little or too much with it."

He handed over my food to me and bade me farewell.

I took it and clasped it to my breast. It submitted and put up no resistance.

I went back to my place. I saw its eyes regarding me and it stuck out its tongue and conversed with me. I implored it to be nice to me, for there is no assurance about life. It deliberated with me with the softness of its belly and tormented me with friction. I said to myself: "Let me try." I released it in front of me, I its supervisor and custodian. It crouched where it was in front of me, observing me while I watched over it.

On the fourth night my spiritual guide came to me, for he had realised the reason for my delay.

"It has induced forgetfulness in you, and your destiny has been lost to you." He chased it away and it took shelter in the rocks. I came to with water being sprinkled on my face, and he brought me back to where his tent was, to the date palm and the spring of water.

"I did my best."

"Listen to what I say."

"I bore in mind all you said, but it did not stop looking and talking."

"I shall not try out the fox and the wolf and the hyena, the cat and the leopard and the lion. Not many nights remain before the waning of the moon. I have great affection for you, and so I shall make an attempt with you for the thousandth time", he said to me, smiling or in despair.

HE ENTERED his tent and came out with a young girl and a goat. He looked at me and made me swear to treat them kindly, for, on the third and last night, if I was not cured of the deviation of my soul, there would be no way in which I would be freed.

I returned to my place and began talking to the young girl about appropriate matters: the names of the mountains and the stars, the attributes of imagination, and of male and female camels.

She was like a gazelle. Her name was Na'ila, Na'ila the daughter of Hasan.

On the first evening she sat and milked the goat and intoxicated me with the crescent moon.

On the second morning she woke me with a date sweet as honey in my mouth. On the same night she named the stars for me, sang some melodies, and, claiming she was a wolf, gave me a fright. Then she patted me on the shoulder and put me to sleep like a doll in her lap. She removed fear from me by telling me that she herself was the wolf: "There is no one on the mountain except Na'ila, you and the goat."

On the third day at noon, the heat having become intense, she advised me to discard my clothes and massaged my burning body with pure milk.

IN THE EVENING she roamed about me in imagination. When we were well into the night, she removed my confusion through proximity and completed her education of me by elucidating the parts of the body: here is the nose, here the neck, this is called a breast, that the navel, then the fist, the upper arm, the belly, the white and black of the eye, the eyelashes, the palm of the hand, the foot, the stomach and the vulva—and she pointed to the genitals and I had a vision of bed, then she touched the eyebrow and asked me about frottage and intercourse with penetration.

On the third night I returned and talked to him.

"What happened with her?"

"God knows that I did not stretch out my hand, nor act wrongly towards my Sheikh, nor seek gratification for myself in seclusion."

"I know, I know. However, I am referring to the goat."

"The goat? The goat?"

I was lost for words, for it was as though there had never been a goat. For an instant I was detained by the vision of it as it looked at me while Na'ila was drawing off the milk I had drunk and with which I had been massaged.

I knew that the time for my return had drawn near and in this journey, too, I had missed the chance of release.

Translated from the Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies

Improvidence

Closer to you than I
Now or shall ever lie
Our son lies fast asleep
Below your loaded lap:

Whose eyes will never share
That loveliness you are
Nor, sharing it, improve
The improvidence of love.

Graeme Wilson

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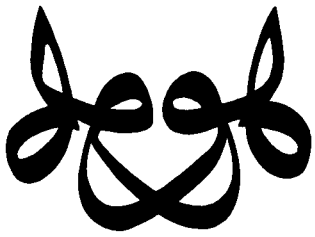
S. J. D. Green

Beyond The Satanic Verses

Conservative Religion & the Liberal Society



BRITISH SOCIETY confronts a social problem which little more than a generation ago would have been inconceivable. It may be defined as the challenge which conservative religion, both Christian and non-Christian, poses to the dominant secular-liberal culture of British society—a challenge widely (if narrowly) perceived, and widely (if thoughtlessly) condemned. The *cause célèbre* of "the Rushdie case" has highlighted the dichotomy between the ideal of free speech and the agony of blasphemous insult in a tolerant society. At the same time, it has alerted enlightened critics of Islam, both immigrant and indigenous, to the social shortcomings of that creed, judged by the highest standards of liberal morality.

But the question of conservative religion and its challenge to the morals and manners of the liberal state is not simply a matter of Muslims against the rest. The long-drawn-out saga of Northern Ireland's troubles has always baffled Englishmen, and only confuses and angers them more as they begin to appreciate the scale of the religious dimension—specifically, the mutual antagonism of the Protestant and Catholic communities, which continues to divide education, social life, and political alignments in the Province. And the semi-farcical charade which accompanied the expulsion of the Lord Chancellor of England from his (Scottish) Independent Free Presbyterian Church, the "Wee Frees", because of his attendance at a Roman Catholic Mass held to honour a dead colleague, has reminded them that Christian bigotry also thrives—albeit eccentrically—on the mainland.

Yet behind those perceptions lies a paradox. This "religious problem" has arisen not as society has become more religious, but rather as it has become (at least apparently) *less* religious. And it has erupted not because a religious residuum has successfully united in holy warfare against the unholy mass of the British population, but because the faithful have continued to assert the validity of their traditions against the manners and morals of the dominant secular-humanist culture—largely in and through the language of those manners and that morality. In its seeming paucity and its unquestionable diversity, the religious minority poses more of a challenge to the confidence of the liberal state, and to the self-esteem of liberal society, than it did only a generation ago; while its traditional, or conservative, wing could cause more problems for liberal culture than the nihilist Left ever achieved in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

"Conservative religion" may be defined as the worldly forms assumed by persons and institutions whose commitment to a religion and to its implications and interpretations prevents them from acknowledging the truth, still less the wisdom, of secular-liberal ethics and secular-liberal politics when these impinge upon the ethical and political dimensions of a religiously defined life. Refusal to be contaminated by the germs of liberal dogma, whether in religion or in ethics or in politics, is sustained in three ways. First, through a consistent privileging of the revealed over the rational in theological dogmatics. Secondly, through an equally consistent preference for the obligatory over the discretionary in social behaviour. Finally, through a ceaseless commitment to the maintenance of a particular way of life, and understanding of life.

Fixed in an irreducible belief in the absolute authority of specific revelations, religious conservatives are bound to the unambiguous validity of certain ways of living as understood from their holy texts. They are thus locked into conflict with the liberal belief that the truth arises from a process of continuous rational argument, and with the doctrine that "the good life" can only be achieved through that degree of discretion which permits the greatest possible experimental diversity in the conduct of human affairs.

CONSERVATIVE RELIGION, in this definition, is scarcely a new thing—in Britain or elsewhere. Indeed, it is as old as liberal religion and liberal politics. And it is scarcely a unified thing. In contemporary Britain, it includes Protestant Evangelical and pre-Vatican-II Catholic Christians; fundamentalist and traditional Muslims; orthodox Jews; and the more conservative Hindus and Sikhs. Nor is it specifically directed, for those religiously "conservative" groups fit on to no discernible rung of a politico-religious continuum. Politically conservative members of the Church of England do not necessarily have much in common with the Free Presbyterians of

S. J. D. GREEN *is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and a lecturer in Modern History at the University of Leeds. He is currently writing a book on religion in 20th-century Britain.*

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Northern Ireland; conservative Protestants, either in Ulster or on the mainland, find little common cause with Britain's traditional Catholic community. Neither is renowned for their concern for the plight of the Muslim minority in our society. And Muslim organisations have rarely expressed much interest in the continuing difficulties of orthodox Judaism.

More important still, religious differences between these groups have been exacerbated by political divisions. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs continue disproportionately to support the Labour Party. Evangelical Christians (if they are politically committed at all) tend to patronise Right-wing organisations. Britain's Jews are politically divided, its Catholics similarly so. Only in Northern Ireland are the churches of traditional Protestantism explicitly allied to conservative political parties. In that sense, "the religious Right" in Great Britain is very small indeed.

But that sense—and the American analogy which it invokes—is almost certainly misleading in the British context. First, it fails to acknowledge that, in the context of an increasingly secular dominant culture, any assertion of the *primacy* of religious values in social and political life has a potentially conservative connotation. Secondly, it fails to appreciate that among New Commonwealth immigrants and the resident Irish populations of Britain, for instance, political and religious affiliations are strictly differentiated. Political radicalism and religious conservatism are, for those groups, perfectly compatible. Finally, it fails to comprehend how and why a theologically and ethically conservative bias is emerging in British religious culture.

IRONICALLY, ONE OF the most important reasons behind this complex failure of understanding lies in the presumption—so general among "the thinking classes"—of the unimportance of religion. Britain, it is asserted, is probably the most secular, and certainly the most de-Christianised, of all the major industrial societies. Questions about what is happening to British religion, and about the claims that British religion is making on British culture, are therefore of no great significance. But in fact nearly two-thirds of the British population claim to hold serious religious beliefs—a far greater proportion than that which adheres to coherent political dogmas. Certainly, only one in five Britons attends a place of worship once a month, but in doing so they make religious affiliation more significant, as a form of public activity, than any other comparable form of voluntary association. It is not simply their religious affiliations or beliefs which are important, however. It is also their changing nature.[1]

In Britain, as in the United States, there has during the last twenty years been a discernible shift in popular religious opinion, away from theological and political liberalism and towards doctrinal and social conservatism. To some extent it is a shift by default, caused more by the fact that the "liberal" churches have declined faster than the conservative churches than by any noticeable surge in the sacred sensibilities of the general population. This is particularly true of the Protestant churches. In Scotland since 1956, for instance, membership of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church has declined to a much greater extent than that of the Free Church (the comparative figures are: −50%, −26%, −12%). In Northern Ireland, too, the Presbyterians have declined much faster than the Reformed and Evangelical Presbyterian Churches (−30%, −1%, and "no change"). In England, the fastest declining churches have been the United Reform Church and the Unitarian Churches, both of which are theologically liberal.

To some extent also, this shift in religious opinion is no more than a reflection of the changing ethnic composition of the population. First- and second-generation New Commonwealth immigrants form a much higher proportion than they did even one generation ago, and it is from these immigrants and their offspring that the vast majority of Britain's (approximately) one-and-a-half million Muslims, half-million Hindus, and 400,000 Sikhs are drawn. However, to a degree that is observable if not fully measurable, there has also been a reassertion of conservative theological and moral doctrines within the mainstream of British religious organisations, both indigenous and non-indigenous.

At one level, the evidence of that reassertion is very obvious. It is the Free Presbyterian Church alone which has actually grown in Scotland, and more dramatically still in Northern Ireland, since the War. Similarly, it has been the evangelical West Indian and African churches, the independent evangelical churches, and the so-called "house churches" which have actually grown in England since 1970.

At another level, the evidence is more problematical, but it is still worthy of note. One way to demonstrate it is to note shifts of opinion and persons *within* mainstream British churches towards more conservative theological positions. A recent study of British Baptist congregations found that "smaller churches, by and large, are growing while the larger ones are declining", and noted that the smaller congregations are predominantly conservative in theology. Another study of the same denomination, comparing only those societies with more than 50 members, identified a direct and causal relationship between the growth of a church and the theology of its minister, and concluded that radical and "middle-of-the-road" ministers tended to have declining churches while conservative evangelical ministers enjoyed growing congregations. What is true of British Baptism also seems true of British Methodism. Methodist institutions in general are declining, but the Methodist Revival Fellowship has grown steadily since its foundation; and membership of the Conservative Evangelicals has risen from 192 churches in 1974 to well over 500 today.[2]

Conservative trends in the two major religious denominations in England—the Church of England and the Muslim community—are much more different to gauge. They are

[1] For the assumption of de-Christianisation and its presumed consequences, see most recently, Ross McKibbin, "The Way We Live Now", *London Review of Books* (vol. 12, no. 1), 11 January 1990. The figures for religious affiliation and belief are drawn from *British Social Attitudes: Special International Report* (1989).

[2] Steve Bruce, *Firm in the Faith* (1984), pp. 40-44. John Briggs, "Report of the Denominational Enquiry Group to the Baptist Union Council", unpublished mimeo, p. 15. Paul Beasley Murray and A. Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide: An Assessment of Baptist Church Growth in England* (1980), p. 36.

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also, for very different reasons, partially hidden from view. An overwhelmingly liberal, middle-aged, and well-publicised episcopate tends to obscure the reality that, according to the most significant study of recent Anglican ordinands, "at least in the short term, the future of the church will be with the conservatives". If that is so, and if it is the younger ordinands who are proving to be the more conservative, then recent tussles over the New or Alternative Prayer Books, the ordination of women, and parish reactions to such élite publications as *Faith in the City* (1985) may have more to them than a first glance at these and other contemporary eruptions might suggest.[3] The same is true, if for less obviously generational reasons, in the Islamic community in Britain. At the very least, the more obviously conservative and assertive of the *ulema* (the learned men) and the *imam* (the leaders in prayer) do seem to be getting much more of a hearing of late, and recent outbursts over *The Satanic Verses* may mark merely the beginning, rather than the culmination, of a militant Islamic presence in British public life.

IT IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE to view these developments not as proof of a significant backlash against the theological and pastoral indulgences of the 1960s, but rather as the passing gesticulations of essentially moribund institutions. One may also interpret them as unquestionably significant, but largely unconnected; insisting, for instance, that the apparent emergence of a militant Islam in Britain is symptomatic of a peculiar strain placed upon that faith in this country. The phenomenon of Protestant revival in Northern Ireland may simply be a function of the peculiarities of that hybrid nation and have no relevance to the more general paths of social development elsewhere in mainland and mainstream Britain. I believe, however, that the significance of these developments lies in the impulse for *cultural defence* which motivates them, and their connections in the sense of *peripherality* which associates them, and may yet unite them.[4]

Britain is a more religious country, and a more conservatively religious country, the further north and west one travels from London. Scotland is a much more religious country than England. Something like one-third of its population (37%) claims Church membership, as opposed to little more than one-eighth (13%) in England. And Northern Ireland is much more religious than either of these two mainland countries. As the Reverend Ian Paisley often points out, there are "more born-again people in Ulster to the square mile than anywhere else in the world. . . ." Very nearly 40% of the Protestant population of Northern Ireland attend church at least once a week, and the corresponding figure for the Roman Catholic population is even higher.[5]

This "national" factor is compounded by a regional factor. For New Commonwealth immigration and settlement, from which the vast majority of Britain's Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs are drawn, is not evenly distributed by residence across the country. It is heavily concentrated in the older industrial towns and cities of the central Midlands, East Lancashire, West Yorkshire and lowland Scotland, with an important additional conglomeration in Greater London. With that last exception, it is largely removed from the influential South-Eastern commuter-belt of what might be called fashionable England.

So the religious map of Britain, and also the map of conservative-religious Britain, varies according to the national standpoint of the viewer. From England, Britain appears to be a uniformly secular society. But England appears merely unfaithful from Northern Ireland; so too, to a lesser extent, from Scotland. The rich towns and cities of South-East England seem little more than smug citadels of faithless indifference when viewed from the great industrial conurbations of the northern and western periphery: Belfast, Bradford, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. This is particularly true of those cities which are not only homes to a large non-indigenous non-Christian population, but are also (as in the case of Bradford) leading centres of contemporary, indigenous and Christian "house-church", or conservative evangelical, Protestant movements. The map varies also according to ethnic standpoints: the Caucasian population—Ulstermen, evangelicals and the house-church notwithstanding—seems rather lax to the more religiously-committed Indian-continent and Afro-Caribbean communities.

What unites those responses is a sense not only of geographical but also of political, cultural, and in particular religious peripherality—the sense of disadvantage born in a conviction that there is an essential centre to British society (a political and cultural, as well as a geographical centre) from which they are positively and increasingly excluded; and that the principal reason for their exclusion is the antagonism of liberal society, and the liberal state, towards their religious identities.

One of the peculiar features of modern liberal democratic societies, so the distinguished American sociologist Edward Shils has argued, is that as the "centre"—society's central value-system—now moves further outward to the periphery than ever before in the history of human societies, so the values, the institutions, and the personnel of the central élites penetrate further down the social order, integrating a greater and wider range of the population into their norms and organisations. Yet paradoxically, as this occurs, the tensions between centre and periphery in society are exacer-

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[3] Robert Towler and A. P. M. Coxon, *The Fate of the Anglican Clergy: A Sociological Study* (1979), p. 205. Graham Howes, "The Views of Lay Members of the Church of England on the Alternative Prayer Book and other Controversial Issues in the Church of England", unpublished mimeo, presented to the Sociology of Religion Seminar in the University of Oxford, Michaelmas 1986. See in ENCOUNTER, June 1986, Julius Gould, "Theologians in the Political Mêlée"; and September-October 1986, Antony Flew, "An Ungodly Muddle".

[4] See Roy Wallis, "Theories of Moral Indignation and Moral Crusades" in his *Salvation and Protest: Studies of Social and Religious Movements* (1979), pp. 92-104; Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery and other Essays in Macro-Sociology* (1975), pp. 3-16.

[5] Keith Ward, *The Turn of the Tide: Christian Belief in Britain Today* (1989), pp. 12-15. Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster! The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (1986), p. 269. Edward Moxon-Browne, *Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland* (1983), p. 125. Roy Wallis, Steve Bruce, and David Taylor, *"No Surrender": Paisleyism and the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Northern Ireland* (1986), p. 5.

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bated. The technology and the competence of consensus expand; but the force and the explicitness of dissent increase.

Edward Shils's thesis sheds considerable descriptive light on the origins, direction, and even the rhetorical manifestations of Britain's contemporary cultural strife. For in the war between liberal society and conservative religion in modern Britain, liberal society has unquestionably been the centralist assailant, and conservative religion remains the peripheral resistant. The principal method of attack has been through the legal, political, and moral tools of liberal doctrine, and their secret weapon has been the pursuit of cultural uniformity under the guise of encouraging "cultural diversity". Advocates call this the pursuit of "multi-culturalism" in society. Opponents—especially conservative religious opponents—call it the pursuit of secular humanism under another name.

STUDENTS OF American society and American religion will recognise the terms of this rhetorical (and real) battle well enough, and will appreciate that not every claim for pity made by conservative religious organisations about an allegedly overbearing central authority can be taken at face value. But, once again, the British case differs from the American model.

First, the cry that the central authorities are actively unsympathetic to religious values is more easily supported in the British case. For instance, the proposed Broadcasting Bill, currently before Parliament, contains a clause which would prevent the new Independent Television Commission from granting licences to "organisations whose objectives are wholly or mainly of a religious nature"—thereby leaving Britain on a par with yesterday's Eastern-bloc régimes in its restrictions against religious channels.[6]

Secondly, the complaint of various church groups that the central authorities are unwilling to sustain pluralistic practice in the management of society's values can be upheld from, for instance, a reasonably impartial examination of custodial decisions made by divorce courts. In cases of irreparable marital breakdown between a member of "mainstream" society and a member of any of the conservative and evangelical churches, the latter invariably lose.[7]

Finally, the suspicions of religious people that the centre of British society is determined to impose a secular and humanistic culture upon its citizens is given credence by the response of British officialdom to the most crucial questions which continue to divide liberal ideologists from conservative doctrinalists. Three such questions stand out: *(1)* the definition of, and the proper penalties for, blasphemous enunciation; *(2)* the identification of, and proper legal proscriptions against, sexual licentiousness; and *(3)* the specification of, and the proper means to facilitate, the sacred content of general education.

[6] *Sunday Telegraph*, 19 November 1989, p. 5. Even the proposed amendments to this Bill, such as the licensing of a religious cable channel provided that it permits a variety of religious views to be aired, do not constitute an admission of the principle of religious freedom of expression for this medium.

[7] Bryan Wilson, private communication to author.

CONSIDER FIRST the case of blasphemous enunciation. There is still a law in the United Kingdom which specifically forbids attacks on the doctrines of the Church of England and thereby prohibits salacious or scandalous comment about God or His Son, Jesus Christ. It was invoked successfully in a private prosecution brought by Mrs Mary Whitehouse against the editor of *Gay News*, the best-known homosexual newspaper in Great Britain, when it published a poem by James Kirkup, a well-known poet and self-proclaimed "gay Christian". "The Love that Dare Not Speak Its Name", depicted an imagined homosexual relationship between a Roman centurion and Jesus Christ.

This case came to trial in 1979. Ten years later, the eruption of the Salmon Rushdie furore, and the ferocity of Muslim reactions to what was widely perceived by them as a blasphemous libel on the Prophet Mohammed, led to a vigorous campaign within the organised Muslim community to persuade the central authorities to reinterpret the law of blasphemous libel to include other major religions—with the clear implication that the law might be used in future to prosecute works of art which either the Director of Public Prosecutions, *or any private person*, believed to have transgressed against those norms.

The most recent attempt to argue the case in existing law has just failed in the High Court. But the campaign for an extension of the law will continue for the foreseeable future. Indeed, the British Muslim Alliance has been particularly active in pursuit of a cross-denominational council to fight

Abolishing Blasphemy

IN TWO JUDGMENTS *delivered on April 9 the Court of Appeal has clarified the law in the difficult areas of blasphemy, sedition and public order offences. I suggest the way of reform is now plain to see: abolish blasphemy but strengthen the law, if indeed it be thought necessary, by including words of insult or abuse against another's religion as an offence under Section 4, sub-section 1, of the Public Order Act 1986 if the words are likely to provoke violence or public disorder. I have a confession to make. In Lemon (the "Gay News" case) I floated the idea of extending the law of blasphemy to include other religions as well as the Christian.*

ON FURTHER **reflection I agree with the Law Commission that this is neither desirable nor possible. Such an extension would result in uncertainty (How many religions? What is a religion?) and would lead to further restriction upon freedom of expression.**

In a plural society pledged to the protection of human rights the only acceptable restriction is if the insult is likely to provoke violence or public disorder. Let us consign blasphemy to the legal historian and concentrate on public order.

Lord Scarman
in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

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blasphemy generally—a council which, they argue, could be based upon the principles both of ecclesiastical comprehensiveness and of the general will, generally expressed. Hence Mr Allame Abfulfateh Chisti, managing director of the British Muslim Alliance, has declared his support for the proposition that, along with Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, Martin Scorsese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which caused offence to so many Christian groups in Britain, and which (because of the anomalous laws governing cinema licences in this country) actually *was* banned by certain local authorities, should be "*democratically* . . . terminated and destroyed" (italics added).[8] The Church of England has actively and publicly (albeit quite ineffectually) supported this campaign. Apparently lacking the theological confidence to assert exclusive access to spiritual truth, it could scarcely have produced any justification for the denial to another great faith of the protection which it itself enjoys.

The campaign has been unsuccessful, however, because the secular authorities in Britain have refused to sanction it. But why? There is no firm evidence that the majority of the British population would oppose an extension of the blasphemy law. Platitudinous opinion no doubt presumes that the secular authorities in Britain so prize the right of freedom of speech that they would not countenance the extension of statute law to diminish its enriching licence. However, it is difficult to believe that this is true, since in recent years Parliament has happily endorsed the promulgation of the Race Discrimination Act which severely curtails the rights of British citizens to insult and abuse each other—as, for that matter, does the Public Order Act.

In other words, freedom of speech, *per se*, is not the issue. No doubt the question of practicality is important. Put bluntly: if Islam, then why not Scientology? But underlying that rhetorical question—the nightmare of the thin-end-of-the-legislative-wedge—is an ever-present fear. It is not merely that the law of blasphemy might be extended to include a very large number of religions and be invoked by their representatives in order to bring cases of blasphemous libel against numerous abusers of the "right" to free speech, but that such cases would actually be successful. And that, suddenly, Britain might begin to look like a rather illiberal society. . . .

The *Gay News* trial revived the application and the penalties of a law that seemed to many to be in abeyance; it had not been invoked for nearly a century prior to Mrs Whitehouse's ingenious and tenacious invocation of its purposes. The success of her prosecution astounded the liberal Left. But it revealed no more than informed sociological analysis could have told them: that a sense of the sacred in holy things and scriptural persons extends far beyond that minority who actually attend religious services; extends, indeed, beyond their belief in the inviolability of free speech. For only about one in three Britons admits to having "no religious beliefs", and only about one in ten is committed to doctrinal atheism.[9] In other words, it just might be that prosecutions for blasphemy have succeeded in Britain, and may succeed in future, because the law protects something which sufficient numbers of persons deem worthy of protection. Imagine, then, what could happen if that law were extended to other religions. . . .

RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES, of every variety, have always opposed the permissive society, particularly as it affects traditional sexual taboos. Their opposition is rooted in a revealed and authoritative morality. But, like their opposition to unrestrained blasphemy, it has often been justified in strictly democratic terms, and sometimes with surprising results. In 1982, for example, the British government bowed to a judgment made in the European Court of Human Rights declaring it to be in breach of basic freedoms for its failure to extend the Homosexual Reform Act of 1967 to Northern Ireland, and passed an Order in Council extending the jurisdiction of the legislation to the Province. The 1967 Act had legalised consenting adult male homosexual activity in England and Wales, but its provision had not been extended to Ulster, in deference to what was correctly perceived as the conservative state of public opinion there. No one produced any firm evidence to suggest that this state of popular sentiments had changed significantly in the intervening fifteen years. However, the British government gave way.

It is difficult to believe that its motives in this case were idealistically inspired, for it neither vigorously defended the rights of a majority to organise its moral life as it desired, nor acknowledged the right of individuals to personal preferences against which the majority could have no claim. It simply gave in to a greater power; and in so doing succeeded in antagonising the feelings of a large and vocal religious constituency. Irish response was swift and angry. "*Save Ulster from Sodomy*" was the arresting title given to the Democratic Unionist Party's campaign to prevent extension of the law. The campaign failed, but its waging was not without significance. For, although there was no formal institutional contact between the Free Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches over the issue, many Catholics happily signed petitions against the extension of the law. For many, it must have been the first time in their lives that they could even have contemplated adding their signatures to anything drawn up by the Free Presbyterian Church.[10]

THIS WAS AN EXTREME CASE, and it produced a very odd outcome: cooperation between implacable foes, both doctrinal and constitutional, over a common moral issue. It was, in that sense, a rare British example of a form of political compartmentalisation much more common between conservative religious organisations in the USA, which enables theological enemies to join forces as spiritual allies over social issues such as abortion. And it could happen again.

True, recent experience has not been very promising for religious conservatives. For instance, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child has not yet been able to rally all sections of "religious" opinion to its side on the abortion debate. Similarly, the National Viewers and Listeners

[8] *The Times*, 8 January 1990, p. 2.
[9] Keith Ward, *The Turn of The Tide*, p. 12.
[10] Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster*, pp. 150-51.

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Association, though widely represented across the religious spectrum, has won relatively little effective institutional support for its various—and frequently very popular—campaigns to proscribe what it perceives to be the pornographic and violent images broadcast so frequently by the principal channels of mass communication.[11] But it is less clear that this will always be the case, for as the centre has intruded more and more into the cultural life of the periphery, the periphery has found itself both in need of and, paradoxically, in command of the resources of resistance, merely in and through its claim to be permitted the same rights of cultural autonomy as the centre. Where once the periphery was vulnerable to the doctrine of diversity in and for a multicultural society, it will soon be able to claim that argument for its own.

EFFORTS TO PRESERVE religious education for children, and to a lesser extent to protect the differentiation of the sexes (by choice) according to religious law, represent aspects of traditional religious custom which can with some semblance of credibility be justified in terms of individual expression and personal choice, and can be defended within the legalistic terms of liberal society. They can be justified both in terms of personal choice in the education which parents wish for their children, and even (in some instances) in terms of individual expression, such as the recent case of the Altringham schoolgirls who clearly wished to wear their Muslim veils to school, and were undoubtedly sufficiently mentally and emotionally competent to declare such a preference. Yet liberal society, in Britain at least, has not consistently defended these rights, nor honoured its own pluralistic rhetoric. It has given the lie to its protestations of good faith in the matter of religion.

Nowhere has this been more clearly exposed than in the field of education. The conservative and religious challenge—whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh—to liberal and secular values was exemplified by their response to the 1985 *Swann Report* on education and multi-cultural values.[12] And nowhere is the common ground, actual and potential, between religious conservatives—indigenous or non-indigenous, Christian or non-Christian—more clearly visible. For in the field of educational policy the gap between centre and periphery is at its widest; and the demands which the centre has made, and will continue to make, of the periphery are at their most strenuous.

The centre demands nothing less than the repudiation of parental choice, the limitation of individual expression, and the dilution of peripheral cultures: in the words of the *Swann Report*, "minorities may maintain their individual cultures only in so far as they are not in conflict with rationally-shared values". Moreover, as its peripheral critics point out, it has the effrontery to do so within a document which proclaims that the proper approach to world religions and cultures is to "celebrate diversity". It is not altogether surprising that the periphery has chosen to affirm the validity of its various cultures, regardless of whether the centre does or does not deem them to be rational. What *is* surprising, perhaps, is that the periphery, in resisting the cultural imperialism of the centre, has revealed to many of its component parts, probably for the first time, that they have more in common than they once knew.

THE SWANN REPORT is to all intents and purposes the "gospel" of multi-culturalism. But it is in fact a document which extols not "multi-culturalism" at all, but rather that degree of cultural pluralism which is acceptable to a secular and liberal society. Minority culture, as defined by British officialdom, finds favour with *Swann* when it conforms to "rationally-shared values": specifically, secular liberal values. For *Swann* conceives of religion only as an inherently diverse aspect of human existence; an aspect to be "taught" diversely to all (in so far as the various doctrines and practices of the many religions of the world can reasonably be taught to everyone), within a curriculum which, in its understanding of the proper cultural role not only of religion, but also of art, music, drama, sport, and even of secular learning, effectively repudiates many of the most carefully formulated and tenaciously held religious doctrines and practices.

Religion is defined in *Swann* as a branch of knowledge, and its province is strictly limited. Not only is it to be accorded no special status, it is permitted no exclusive claim over other forms of learning. Hence religious taboos against anthropomorphic art, sensual music, and mixed-sex sports are ruled out. In other words, *Swann* acknowledges the virtues of cultural diversity only up to the point of their subordination to liberal values; and religious culture as valuable only when it can be apprehended from a secular point of view.

The most immediate and most explicit opposition to *Swann* after its publication in 1985 came from Britain's Muslim community. The Islamic Academy in Cambridge and the Islamic Cultural Centre in London issued a joint statement attacking the *Report*'s intellectual presuppositions, and criticising its logical shortcomings. Most interestingly, perhaps, they specifically repudiated its general recommendation that the 1944 Education Act should be amended with regard to religious worship in schools. For, as the authors of the joint statement well understood (and understood in all probability rather better than the authors of *Swann*), the *Report* constituted as much a rejection of the provisions for Christian worship as a repudiation of the aspirations of the Muslim community for an Islamic education of its children through the state sector. Faced with the "multi-culturalism" and "multi-faithism" of *Swann*'s secular-liberal didacticism, those Muslim leaders—provided that the right for Muslim children to withdraw from collective worship and assembly on these occasions was guaranteed—declared their preference for retaining provision for Christian worship as laid out in the 1944 Act.

It is not difficult to see why. To men of religion—any

[11] See Roy Wallis, "Morality and the Media: The National Viewers and Listeners Association" in his *Salvation and Protest*, pp. 105-29.

[12] *Education for All: The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* (HMSO, 1985).

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religion—*Swann* amounted to regression. For Christian conservatives, it was a betrayal of the Act. To Muslims, latitudinarian or conservative, it was worse than 1944. For both, as for other religious minorities in Britain, it made the task of preserving the sacred in modern society, and certainly of preserving religious values in the education of young people schooled in the maintained sector, that much more difficult.

This was not all. *Swann* either passed over or positively rejected other long-standing Muslim demands about the nature and content of education for *Muslim* pupils in British schools. These include: the demand for single-sex schools after the age of puberty; the provision of *halal* food; the use of Muslim-style uniforms, especially for girls; the proscription of music and dance, and of all art except calligraphy and geometric drawing; the limitation of sex education to Koranic laws of marriage and sexual morality; and the exclusion of all reference to the theory of evolution and other aspects of Darwinism in science teaching.

These are not trivial demands. Their fulfilment would significantly alter the nature and content of the education which the state system affords to Muslim children; and also, in schools where Muslims form the vast majority of pupils, the education which the state system would be able to afford to non-Muslim pupils. But it would be quite wrong to conclude that, on this account, these demands strike no sympathetic chords among non-Muslim cultural and religious conservatives in Britain. On the contrary. There is much in them with which they sympathise; indeed, with which they can find common ground.

MANY OF THE secular taboos entailed in Koranic Islam are not peculiar to that faith. And many, if not most, of the customs which they imply, particularly in the treatment of the young (and especially of girls), are common to the more traditional forms of other revealed religions, including Judaism and Christianity. The injunctions against music and dance find parallels in Protestant, and especially Puritan, prohibitions; they still characterise, for instance, the social teaching of the Free Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland. The same is true, to a very similar extent, and often for remarkably similar reasons, of sex education, and of Darwinian scientific education. In a different way, the division of labour between males and females—which to first-generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrants is, if anything, far more important than the protection of its male youth from secular and Western influences at school—is compatible with attitudes found in traditional Christian, especially Protestant, and even in orthodox Jewish culture.[13]

YET MUSLIMS in Britain, like Free Presbyterians—and, for that matter, like Hindus and Sikhs—face a problem which Roman Catholics, Nonconformists and Jews do not confront, if and when they choose to provide for the education of their own children in their own way. They are not permitted official denominational status for educational purposes. Accordingly, they receive no funds from either central or local government to educate their children inside the state system according to what they perceive to be their needs and aspirations. They resent this. They point out, reasonably enough, that they pay taxes and are entitled to the facilities enjoyed by other denominations. But they have consistently been denied that status, and not by default or mere neglect. The *Swann Report* specifically opposed—and the principal teaching federation, the National Union of Teachers, continues to oppose—the granting of voluntary-aided status to Muslims.[14] And, for all their protestations to the contrary, the main reason why they oppose the extension of that privilege to so large a religious denomination is that the Muslim community would educate the children under its tutelage in a way, and with a set of values, of which the National Union of Teachers disapproves.

Until recently, it seemed that Muslims could do very little to remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs. But the provisions of the 1988 Education Reform Act envisaged the free-enterprise possibility of schools opting out of Local Educational Authority control should a majority of the parents and the governors of a school express their wish to do so, and this seemed to offer an opportunity which certain *ulema* have been quick to identify. They are now urging that where a state school has a Muslim majority on its roll, the Muslim governors and parents of that school should exercise this right. The governors would then introduce changes in the curriculum and the general running of the school which implemented all of the substantial Muslim demands, effectively turning many British schools into Muslim religious and educational institutions. There is no reason to believe that the same could not, or will not, happen in schools numerically dominated by Hindus, Sikhs, and Free Presbyterians. The few privately-maintained traditional religious schools in Britain which sustain, for a very small minority, the culture and doctrines of its many conservative religions, may become—under public auspices, and with various public consequences—a multiplicity.

And that would be doubly ironic. The very idea of schools opting out of local government control was conceived by the present Conservative government as a means for enabling what it presumes to be the essential cultural conservatism of the vast mass of British parents to exert itself against what it takes to be the unrepresentative pedagogic radicalism of so many Labour-controlled local educational authorities. But the effect of those provisions may in fact be to enable an altogether more coherent and more conservative *religious* conservatism to establish a multi-religious alternative to the

[13] Mervyn Hiskett, *Schooling for British Muslims: Integrated, Opted-out or Denominational?* (Social Affairs Unit Research Report no. 12, 1989), pp. 11-17, 26-28. Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster!*, pp. 185-89. To compare the views of parents with the rather different views of their daughters, see R. Sharif, *Interviews with Young Muslim Women of Pakistani Origin*, Research Paper no. 27 (Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, 1985), *passim;* Daniele Joly, *The Opinions of Mirpuri Parents in Saltley, Birmingham, about their Children's Schooling*, Research Paper no. 23 (1984), pp. 10-11. Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster!*, pp. 241-42.

[14] Jurgen S. Nielsen, "Islamic Education in Britain", Research Papers nos. 30 and 31 (Selly Oak Colleges, June and September 1986), p. 29.

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secular-humanist education currently on offer. That would indeed render British education multi-cultural and multi-faith, but in a way never envisaged: explicitly contrary to the vision of the *Swann Report*, and to the proponents of "multi-culturalism" and "multi-faithism" in contemporary Britain.

IT IS DANGEROUS to underestimate the effects of such a change. There are, to date, just four "independent Christian schools" in Northern Ireland, and between 50 and 100 in mainland Britain. There are about the same number of private Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Roman Catholic schools.[15] But the possibility of opting-out could lead, in a very short time, to the establishment of hundreds of effectively independent Protestant Evangelical, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh schools in the United Kingdom and Great Britain. The genuinely alternative education which those schools offered would not necessarily be limited to the children of parents who actively desired it. Opting-out will require no more than majority support from parents and governors. "Cultural minorities" within those schools which opt out would be obliged either to take what was on offer, or to seek their schooling elsewhere. By no means all of them will be capable or have a real possibility of exercising the second option effectively.

The state has permitted itself one overt and one covert legal mechanism to prevent this eventuality. The provisions of the 1988 Education Act require that "any change of character [in a school opting out of Local Authority control] requires the approval of the Secretary of State". But what would happen if a Secretary of State for Education refused that permission? Given the symbolic significance which the right to opt out has assumed for many Muslims, it is difficult to see that such a step could be interpreted as anything other than overt and institutionalised racism; similarly so by Hindus and Sikhs. And by the Ulster Protestants? As just another example of the second-class status which London habitually imposes upon its Irish citizens.

Covertly, the government could attempt to impose a uniform pedagogical secularisation in all maintained schools, whether in or out of Local Authority control. The National Curriculum could be constructed so that it effectively prohibited religious teachings on such matters as biology, sexuality and ethics, and thereby rendered illegal, as a matter of core curriculum, a conservative religious interpretation of the sacred content of education.

There are signs that central authority intends to do precisely that. The Northern Ireland Educational Reform Act allows for the possibility of compulsory courses in "cultural heritage" and "mutual understanding" as part of the core curriculum. That idea, and the practices it entails, could easily be transferred to the mainland. It could also be extended to include not simply matters of ethics but also questions about human reproduction and natural history. And that might lead to a more widespread adoption of that form of opting-out already successfully practised in Northern Ireland by the Free Presbyterian Church and its supporters: political opting-out.

This is no idle threat. Indeed, it may not even require the stimulus of educational reform to provoke it. In the light of the Rushdie affair, and of what is perceived by the Muslim population as the failure of the British government to recognise legitimate demands, Muslim organisations in a number of British cities are actively considering the fielding of candidates in local and national elections. As the arguments about the blasphemy law and its extension continue, and tensions about the possible path of educational reform rise, that possibility becomes stronger day by day.

In some British cities, it is already a realistic political scenario. A Muslim candidate, standing as an independent, could certainly win a local election in parts of Bradford; similarly in Leeds, and in some districts of South London. More importantly, perhaps, Muslim candidates standing against official Labour Party candidates in many of the larger cities of Britain could (given the historical allegiance of New Commonwealth immigrants to the Labour Party, and the apparent willingness of the Muslim electorate to switch its vote if ordered by its religious leaders to do so) bring about a defeat for Labour in a number of urban constituencies which it has traditionally regarded as its own. The significance of that development would extend far beyond a psephological embarrassment for the Labour Party. It would herald the emergence in contemporary Britain of a disturbingly genuine "multi-cultural society"—that is, an ethnically and culturally divided society.

THE DILEMMA OF the British state and of British society is acute. Any religious concessions, moral concessions, and particularly educational concessions which are made to conservative religious groups, Christian or non-Christian, indigenous or non-indigenous, will inevitably be interpreted as an expression of weakness, or at worst an example of official collusion in illiberal and inegalitarian social policies. Yet a blank refusal to make any concessions, even those which would, to religious conservatives, constitute no more than an extension of equal civil rights, will equally inevitably be interpreted as yet further proof of the hostility of central authority to religious values, or even as an assertion of covert racism or ethnic superiority by English liberal culture against all other cultures in modern Britain.

That dilemma, of course, is largely of the state's own making. It has insisted upon retaining its right not to draw a distinction between Church and State, even in a multi-religious society. Yet, so conservatives of every religious variety firmly believe, it has also chosen, subtly but repeatedly, to repudiate the religious bases of its own society.

British society has embarked upon a self-conscious pursuit of "cultural diversity", at least in and through its educational system, without committing itself to honour all—or indeed any—of the actual forms of cultural difference which have emerged in Britain during the last half-century. Hence it appears peculiarly resistant to real cultural pluralism, and the state especially contemptuous of real re-

[15] Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster!*, p. 175; and private information.

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ligious commitment in a way that is not true of American society and the US Constitution. This is the agony of a liberal society which neither believes unequivocally in its own values, nor in the honest implications of its pluralistic rhetoric.

The implications of that equivocation and dishonesty are truly frightening. For the one concession which liberal society's most fervent champions wish it to make to inflamed religious opinion—abolition *in toto* of the blasphemy laws—is the least likely to assuage that opinion. On the contrary, it would in their eyes be evidence of innate decadence rather than of liberality.

Conversely, the one concession which is most reasonably demanded by conservative religious groups—the extension of effective denominational status to other religious "minorities" for pedagogical purposes—is the least likely to be permitted by those self-consciously liberal forces in society, whether among the literary intelligentsia or among the teaching unions, which are most deeply committed to extending its secular purposes.

The liberal state in Britain is thus incapable of sustaining the unreserved support of its firmest allies, or of assuaging the aggrieved criticism of its most trenchant opponents. This is not a pleasant position to be in. More importantly, it is not a position from which any form of easy political extrication would seem immediately possible.

Thanks

Death has been good to me,
Looking the other way
When I or my family passed;
Touching my parents when
I was not by.

Those whom death dislikes
Hear his bony chuckle
When they phone up mother,
Feel his fumbling fingers
Undoing their buttons.

The Reverend Patrick Brontë
Pacing the rectory garden
Counted off his daughters;
Only Charlotte's husband
Offended by surviving.

Old Moishe Solomon
Happened to be in New York
When the war began; now sits
Friendless and surviving
In his cold water flat.

My slender sobbing son
Flushed and frail from sleep
Didn't seem long for the world:

Moishe counts on his fingers
Son, two grandsons, nieces,
And six million others.
The Reverend Patrick tries
Not to pray to the devil.

My son has three small children.
Death, I should be grateful.

I suppose I am.

Laurence Lerner

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Robert Elegant

The Singapore of Mr Lee

"Confucian" Ethics, Asian Values

PRACTISING the journalist's trade, I have visited many Prime Ministers around the broad arc from Europe to Asia. Except in the wartime laxity of Seoul, none has thrown fewer safeguards around himself than Lee Kuan Yew. Once the gate in the iron railings is opened by two policemen, no guards challenge my car's progress. Two Gurkha soldiers stroll on the wooden veranda, wickedly curved knives a foot long at their sides, and short-barrelled .38 revolvers in their black leather holsters. I see no other security.

The waiting room is open to the breeze in the old Singapore way. The air-conditioned reception room, where hang big coloured lithographs of Singapore birds, is a sealed box with cane chairs set against the walls as if for a school dance. It is all a little stiff.

The Prime Minister, too, is a little stiff. He wears a fawn sports-shirt under a beige polyester leisure suit—and a remote expression. He looks old, although he once looked too young for his age, not to speak of his responsibilities and his power. He is balding; his remaining hair and eyebrows are white. Yet beneath the pouched eyes and puffy cheeks the vigour and vision are intact—only a little blurred.

Early in the hour and five minutes he has allotted me, Lee Kuan Yew speaks wistfully of what he could have done with a bigger island. Jamaica is immense by comparison with Singapore: 4,682 square miles against 243. "When I first saw Jamaica", he said, "I thought to myself: if only I had been given an island this size, what could I have done with it!" Then, unwontedly humble, he observes: "If we had to start all over again to get to the same advanced stage of development, I'm not sure we could do it. Fortunately, the coin flipped 'heads' on several occasions."

Singapore is virtually unique as a trading nation. Its exports are worth more than $27 billion, against less than $1 billion in 1954. Exports actually exceeded Gross Domestic Product, and total trade was three times the internal production of goods and services. As the port for peninsular Malaysia and a major oil-processing centre for the entire region, Singapore today trans-ships raw material—as it always has. It also processes much raw material—as it did not in the past. The Prime Minister sums up the problems of a minuscule city-state: "The foundation is not broad enough. We have to create our stability by dynamism, like a gyroscope spinning to stay upright. We have to run as fast as we can to stay in the same place."

Nowadays, Lee Kuan Yew, in his mid-60s, should be serene and confident. He has built true and strong, and he is respected as beyond question the wisest statesman in Asia, perhaps in the world. He is also the most interesting statesman in Asia, and the most successful. Among those who led fights for independence, only Lee Kuan Yew afterwards ruled wisely—and shaped the new state to his will. Others failed the transition from revolutionary to ruler: Mao Tse-tung in China, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in India, Ho Chi Minh in Viet Nam, and Sukarno in Indonesia. Those great men left disorder—economic, political and administrative—compounded by corruption. Lee Kuan Yew created a briskly efficient industrial mini-power that is virtually free of corruption.

After the first decade or so, however, Singapore did not offer him problems that truly tested his talents. Arrogant but never smug, he has remained dissatisfied. Yet he is curiously apprehensive about the future of Singapore. The elder statesman of Asia still fears Malay intransigence and Islamic fundamentalism, Indonesian ambition, Soviet expansionism, China's assertiveness, and Japan's ruthlessness. He is further concerned that Singaporeans could lose the sense of common nationhood he has instilled in its diverse races, and could recede from the industriousness that has brought prosperity.

He is, none the less, buttressed by his conviction of absolute superiority. He has always found subordinates who are not only capable, but will put up with his imperious moods. He has followed his own vision, and they have followed him.

ROBERT ELEGANT, *who lives in England, was an American foreign correspondent in the Far East for 30 years. He is the author of many novels dealing with the Orient, including "Dynasty" (1981), "Manchu" (1981), "Mandarin" (1984), and "White Sun, Red Star" (1987). His article is taken from his most recent book, "Pacific Destiny", published in New York by Crown Publishers, and in London this summer by Hamish Hamilton.*

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Still, he is human enough to enjoy showing off. In Moscow in 1962, I came upon Lee Kuan Yew dining with a group of Russians and obviously bored. His People's Action Party was facing the critical election that would determine whether he retained the office of Prime Minister, which he had first won in 1959. Urged by Marvin Kalb of NBC, I asked in Mandarin if we could talk with him. He agreed, delighted to display his command of a language that he had learned through hard study. He then calmly, almost dispassionately, predicted the outcome of the forthcoming election—and was right within two percentage points. He exuded confidence; not the edgy assertiveness of a politician shouting as he passes the polling station, but calm certainty. He *knew* he would win—and remake Singapore.

Then, as ever, Lee Kuan Yew's humour and joviality were measured. Essentially cold, he saw nothing remotely laughable about himself or his mission.

No humour, indeed no lightness, enlivened our most recent meeting. I was just beginning my voyage to "rediscover Asia", and I wanted to talk with Lee Kuan Yew first. His insight is formidable, his judgments sharp. I have known him since 1954, but we have not been terribly fond of each other. Moreover, I have written critically about him. Although I hope we feel mutual respect, all I can be certain of is that I respect *him*.

The Prime Minister is gracious in his own brusque way. I sometimes wonder what it is like living inside Lee Kuan Yew, a man of enormous gifts who is not gifted in what the world calls human relations. Detachment from others can be a strength, but also a weakness for a politician. However, his temperament is not my immediate concern.

My son has been the Singapore correspondent of the AP-Dow Jones News Service for some months, and naturally he wants to meet the Prime Minister. But when I officially propose that he accompany me the initial reaction is not encouraging. I persist, pointing out in good Confucian fashion that Simon has a duty to his father as well as to his profession—and would no more report remarks the Prime Minister preferred to keep confidential than I would.

My pieties may have helped. Simon was invited—as a concession, for the Prime Minister is angry at the American press. He is furious at Dow Jones, which owns not only the News Service, but the *Asian Wall Street Journal* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, whose criticism Lee Kuan Yew deeply resents. He has virtually expelled the correspondents of both publications, and has curtailed their circulation in Singapore because they refused to print his rebuttals in full every time.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S feud with Dow Jones does not appear vital, but simply another of those slightly embarrassing, slightly childish conflicts that regularly arise between martinet governments and disrespectful foreign correspondents. Lee Kuan Yew, however, fixes my son with a weary yet piercing eye. He is also annoyed at the United States because he fears it is receding from Asia. The Americans, he says flatly, saved Asia by their military actions and must remain because their strength is still badly needed. Somehow, the trivial matter of American correspondents in Singapore has become entangled with that major issue. The First Amendment to the US Constitution, he points out, guarantees great privileges to the press, but *only* in America; the British tradition, from which derive most of the laws and practices of Singapore, is less indulgent. Under Lee Kuan Yew, the issue is not what Singapore's newspapers, magazines, radio, and television *cannot* say; it is what they *must* say. No British government could get away with the stringent control he exercises over the press. But, as in the past, he turns his back on British tradition and British practices whenever he finds them irksome or inconvenient. London's Privy Council would rule the way he runs Singapore unconstitutional just as firmly as would the United States Supreme Court in Washington.

LEE KUAN YEW IS complex, a man of conflicting traits. Although he could dissemble coolly when he was using the Communist underground to carry him to power, he is by nature hotheaded. He has naturally become imperious during decades of unchallengeable power, when few have dared contradict him—and none consistently. He is also hypersensitive, almost pathologically so. Most politicians would have shrugged off the mild criticism that embroiled him for years in his public quarrel with Dow Jones. Even if he had won the battle, he would still have lost stature in the world's eyes. But he could not pull back.

One of the Prime Minister's closest associates was later to offer a plausible rationale of that behaviour. Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, a Tamil from Sri Lanka who was born in 1915, has been Lee Kuan Yew's spokesman and adviser over the years, as well as his Foreign Minister and first Deputy Prime Minister. I have also known him since 1954 and have felt closer to him than to Lee. He was a good newspaperman before he gave himself to politics, and he is much warmer than Lee (which is no great feat). Dark and white-haired, his nose aquiline, Rajaratnam looks like an amiable Pharaoh.

The Prime Minister's predicament, he says, is the same as that in which George Orwell found himself as a young colonial officer in Burma. Orwell was begged to kill a rogue elephant that villagers said was damaging their crops and threatening their lives. He found that the elephant was not a rogue, but he had to shoot it none the less. If he had not, he would have lost his authority.

The analogy is tempting. It would be more convincing if similar imbroglios had not occurred time after time.

The Prime Minister could not control his ire against *The Eastern Star*, a daily published in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. The *Star* had declared that his government was not as spotlessly clean as he maintained, but was marred by corruption. Indignant at that slur, Lee filed a suit for libel, incidentally entertaining the lawyers by raising some questions regarding the limits to criticism of a public figure. Accustomed to using the law as a blunt instrument to beat his enemies, he may have overlooked the fact that this time it was not *his* law.

We first met in 1954, the year Lee Kuan Yew became a public champion of the anti-colonial movement. After the war in Korea ended, in 1953, I came to Singapore, where I

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was to live for two years while studying the overseas Chinese. Lee Kuan Yew had returned to Singapore in 1950 from Britain, where he studied law at the University of Cambridge. He had married his Singapore sweetheart, who was herself a lawyer; sat at the feet of "social" thinkers like Harold Laski of the London School of Economics; rejected Marxism as self-contradictory; and concluded that the British must be driven out of Singapore and Malaya if they would not go voluntarily. He was then 31 years old.

His great-grandfather had come to Singapore as an illiterate coolie to re-enact the classic success story of the overseas Chinese: from carrying-poles to carriages in one generation. The Lees were Hakka, which means "guest families". The Hakka had come to South China 1,000 years earlier, but had lived apart, following their own customs and speaking their distinctive language. In South-east Asia, they still kept their distance.

Harry Lee (he was called "Harry" by his friends, not Kuan Yew) was himself a little apart from his own people, the overseas Chinese who were almost 80% of the population of the Crown Colony of Singapore. Most of them came from Fukien Province, especially from the great seaport of Amoy, and called themselves Hokkien in their harsh dialect; they dominated the commerce of Singapore. Harry Lee could get along in the Hakka language, but his Hokkien was rudimentary, for the Lee children had not been encouraged to play in the streets. He was, moreover, as illiterate in Chinese as his great-grandfather, just able to write his own name in ideograms. He spoke the English of a cultivated man, but at that time not a word of Mandarin.

IN THE NEW emotional climate of Singapore, those twin deficiencies were grave. Mandarin, the officials' tongue, had decades earlier been declared the common spoken language of China. All educated Chinese spoke it, and China's new Communist rulers were substituting it for local dialects. Mandarin was also the language of the China-oriented schools of Singapore. More numerous than English-language schools, they ardently promoted Chinese culture and instilled pride in being Chinese. Half the youth of Singapore were indoctrinated with cultural and racial arrogance. Because the Communists ruled China, pro-Chinese sentiment became Marxist commitment and anti-colonial fervour. The Communist underground turned Chinese-language schools into training camps for militant Marxists.

The Chinese-educated were angry. They were second-class citizens in a land they believed to be their own, whatever the claim of the indigenous Malays, who could claim no more than 15% of Singapore's population. Unlike Lee Kuan Yew, one of the small English-educated élite, the Chinese-educated had no regard for British culture. They despised all things "Western" as "degenerate". Recalling Japanese victories, they scorned Britain for its weakness and hated the British for their arrogance. Long the underclass of a colonial society, they now knew themselves to be the heirs of the world's oldest civilisation. They also knew their mission: to create a *Chinese* Singapore; a *Communist* Singapore.

It was not that simple for Lee Kuan Yew in 1954, and it was never to be that simple. Although he shared their resentment of the British, his feelings were not virulent. He stood between two increasingly antagonistic worlds.

Early in 1954, Harry Lee let it be known that he now wanted to be called Kuan Yew. He reverted to his Chinese name to make his anti-colonial position unmistakable. He began to study Mandarin, pasting lists of ideograms to his shaving mirror. He appeared to be abandoning the English-educated élite for the intense world of the Mandarin-speaking militants who were either the willing tools of the outlawed Communist movement or its secret members. That was how he wanted it to look. If he were to use the underground movement for his own ends, he had to look and sound like one of its stalwarts.

However, his first major public appearance in his new role required him to wear the stylised white wig of an English barrister, with its sausage curls and little pigtails. As junior counsel, he assisted the eminent British barrister D. N. Pritt, who candidly declared: "I'm not a Communist—I'm what is called a fellow traveller."

The brief trial at which the two appeared was just what the new movement and Lee Kuan Yew needed—public victory over the colonial government. Lee had not recruited the protagonists or manufactured the issue. But both perfectly suited the plans he was perfecting as a labour lawyer.

Lee already had strong ties with those among the English-educated who refused to be pets of the colonial Establishment. Those rebels included not only Chinese, but Indians, Eurasians, and even a few Malays. From that group Lee drew the men he planted in union offices. Others, although in their thirties, were still students at the University of Malaya in Singapore, having returned to the campus from jail. They had been detained as suspected members of the underground Anti-British League or its parent organisation, the Chinese-dominated Communist Party of Malaya, which had risen in armed rebellion in 1948.

Having feigned repentance to secure their release, they might have been expected to lie low. Instead, they formed a Socialist Club (unlike Communism, Socialism was not outlawed). The Socialist Club's journal, *Fajar* (*Progress*), in May 1954 published an article headlined "Aggression in Asia". It denounced the South-east Asia Treaty Organisation as a mechanism for renewed Western imperialism, and it called Malaysia a police state because of the harsh tactics the government used against the Communist uprising. The authorities reacted with blind fury that would have embarrassed a rhinoceros—and with mammoth stupidity. They charged the editorial board with sedition; that is, incitement to overthrow the government.

LEE KUAN YEW had found his opportunity. Lithe beside the stout D. N. Pritt, he argued dramatically in court; his accent pure "Cambridge" and his tone mellifluous, he appealed to British justice, administered though it was by a colonial court that his clients despised. Naturally, his picture was on the front page of every newspaper in Singapore.

The presiding judge agreed with the defence lawyers that there was no case to answer. When counsel and clients celebrated, Lee wore a shirt that gaped open over his belly.

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Having displayed his professional aplomb, he was now promoting his new proletarian image.

Yet he was still a man apart in mid-November 1954, when he spoke at the founding meeting of the People's Action Party, which was later to carry him to power. He wore the cotton shirt and wash trousers that were the uniform of the new radical movement; but he spoke in English. At that inaugural meeting, no more than 60% of the assembly was Chinese—and most of those Chinese spoke English.

The passage of half a year worked a radical change. When the People's Action Party convened its first annual conference in June 1955, Secretary-General Lee Kuan Yew appeared isolated, almost pitiable. It was a Chinese-speaking meeting—and he could not yet speak Mandarin.

Frightened by vicious rioting spearheaded by the students of the Chinese-language high schools, London was rapidly divesting itself of responsibility for Singapore. A local politician named David Marshall held the equivocal title of Chief Minister (not Prime Minister) and exercised limited authority. His was clearly an interim régime, but Lee Kuan Yew did not appear to be a likely successor. Lee, it seemed, would be swamped by the rising tide of Chinese nationalism on which the Chinese-educated were riding toward power.

At the PAP's annual conference in Victoria Hall, whose broad stage was also used for concerts, Lee Kuan Yew stood alone. Physically as well as psychologically, he was distanced from both the ordinary members of the PAP in the hall and the officers on the stage. Lim Ching Siong, the labour activist, student leader, and secret member of the Malayan Communist Party, dominated the meeting. He dispensed the revolutionary rhetoric the crowd wanted—in Mandarin. By that time, only 5% of the assembly was *not* Chinese, and those Chinese who could speak English (as Lim Ching Siong could not) were not doing so. Long Mandarin dialogues between Lim and his admirers on the floor frustrated the few non-Chinese present, but their protests were ignored. The man who then rose was not Lee Kuan Yew; it was Harry Lee. Speaking in English, he spoke across an abyss.

When I left that hectic meeting, I felt that the decision had been made for Singapore. The PAP had become a Chinese party, and Chinese-educated Marxists would assuredly rule the city-state, probably sooner rather than later. Lee Kuan Yew could be useful as an English-speaking agent, but he would remain a subordinate. No matter how hard he studied Mandarin, he would always be an outsider. (Had he not made submission to the colonial overlords by learning their language, which the Chinese-educated called "dog farts"?)

THAT WAS HALF the truth, the obvious half. But Lee Kuan Yew and his English-speaking followers had made a secret deal with the Chinese-speaking radicals—a deal which both sides naturally looked forward to betraying. The PAP was to be Lee's. The radicals were to withdraw from the executive committee, which would consist entirely of English-speaking moderates. The radicals would concentrate on the expanding labour movement, considered the true vehicle to revolutionary power. Lee was to be go-between and front-man for the radicals, and the PAP was to appear a moderate party. Confident that they could manipulate the new "clean" executive committee, the radicals did not stand for office.

In manipulating the labour movement, the radicals imperilled themselves. In late 1956, after fresh Communist-directed rioting, David Marshall interned Lim Ching Siong. Lee Kuan Yew was left free, although he had declaimed in the red-and-gold chamber that he would "prefer communism to colonialism". He was so patently a spent force that I wrote in a book called *The Dragon's Seed* two years later: "The PAP was still a legal party, though only poor, trapped Harry Lee remained at liberty among its leaders."

I PREFER NOT TO dwell on how often I have been wrong during four decades of reporting. But I have rarely been so spectacularly wrong as I was about Lee Kuan Yew. Small consolation that I was right about the force he was to use to seize power. In the same paragraph I also wrote: "The executive leadership was in jail and the organisation uprooted, but a generation was committed to the Communists."

Lee Kuan Yew, however, brilliantly manipulated the Communists, using their racism and their fervour, as well as their joy in hard work, hardship, and sacrifice, and also their genius for organisation. He is, I believe, the only democratic politician ever to use the Communists and then discard them—as they have others. During protracted Machiavellian manoeuvering, he lost interest in working democracy, which he judged "not suitable" for Singapore. Later, he again interned the militants who had been confined by the British and by David Marshall, among them the men whom D. N. Pritt and he had cleared of charges of sedition in the *Fajar* case.

Dennis Bloodworth has comprehensively recounted Lee Kuan Yew's adroit strategy against the Communists in his book *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse* (1987). Despite the clumsy title, it reads like a first-class thriller—with its intrigue, double-dealing, and violence. But it is a true melodrama. Bloodworth went through the files of the Special (political) Branch of the Singapore Police, and Lee Kuan Yew told him about clandestine meetings with the chief delegates of the Communist Parties of Malaya and China. The candid account shows how closely Lee was allied with the Communists during the days when he derided as alarmists those who pointed to the Communist peril.

That protracted deception, which showed Lee Kuan Yew the true face of Communist subversion, accounts in part for his present repression. "Strong measures", he believed, were necessary to stave off Communist subversion. If asked why freedom must still be curtailed, when China has gone out of the business of exporting revolution, Lee and his associates reply: "Threats remain. You must not judge us by Western standards. You cannot expect an Asian government to adopt its tenets from the West! We act as is necessary."

That argument is by no means trivial. A few Communist sympathisers may remain in Singapore, their ardour fanned by Lee's repression. But they lack the tools of revolution: organisation, funds, external support. Of course, Asia—not

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even Westernised high-tech Singapore—is not the West, and authoritarianism is prevalent throughout Asia. But I still believe Singapore cannot justify its repression in practical terms.

The threat was originally China. In February 1989 the Republic of Singapore and the equally nervous Republic of Indonesia began moving toward formal diplomatic relations with the Communist People's Republic of China. Singapore had previously recognised neither the People's Republic nor the Nationalist Republic of China or Taiwan. Yet Lee Kuan Yew was, as always, pragmatic. Although he had exchanged Ambassadors with neither, the Communists maintained a Trade Mission in Singapore and the Nationalists an Information Office. The Chinese Communists also sent him cheap labour under the guise of "trainees", and the Nationalists helped to train his troops.

After "capturing the revolution" from the mainland-oriented Communists, the Prime Minister purged the pro-China sentiment held by so many Singaporeans of its political content. He has, somehow, created a new Singaporean consciousness that is distant from China, although based on Chinese culture. Turmoil and suffering in China obviously assisted that delicate process.

DURING THE YEARS of turmoil, I often asked young men and women the mock-naive question: "What are you?" Index finger touching the nose, each invariably replied in Mandarin: "*Waw shr Junggwawren.*" ("I'm Chinese.") Today the same question draws the answer: "*Waw shr Singjyapawren.*" ("I'm Singaporean.") That reply is still delivered in "South Seas Mandarin", the slurred dialect of the overseas Chinese. Curiously, that language is no longer known in Singapore as *guanhua*, Mandarin, "the officials' tongue", or *putunghua*, "the common tongue", or any of the other terms used in China. It is called *huayü*, which means literally "China language", a new coinage—and it is *the* speech of Singapore.

Although all Chinese are expected to be proficient in *huayü*, English is the working language of Singapore, the common tongue of educated Malays and Indians, as well as of educated Chinese. But Malay is officially the first language of Singapore. Conveniently, Malay is known to almost all; it is not difficult to master, nor offensive to any race, and is not inextricably identified with the potential enemy, Muslim Malaysia. The clash of original languages and cultures, which could have been a constant irritation, has thus been finessed. But Lee cultivates fear of a hostile world to encourage his people to submerge their differences. His success in so doing almost transcends logical explanation. Personal mystique, it appears, has wrought the miracle, just as it miraculously leached *huayü*, which is undeniably the Chinese language, of Chinese chauvinism.

The judgment around the courthouse is that Lee Kuan Yew's wife, Lee Kwa Geok Choo, is the better practical lawyer. Lee Kuan Yew is, however, a practical politician, not an intellectual. His pleasures are not cerebral, and he is not concerned with ideas for their own sake. But he responds to concrete problems with imaginative solutions. His intelligence is of a high order, if intelligence is the ability to adapt rapidly to new circumstances. His mind is very quick, but has little depth. A dedicated pragmatist, he is an absolute Confucian ruler by temperament.

Despite his great achievements, his ambition longs for new challenges. Others disappoint him by failing to come up to his expectations. He disappoints himself by failing to live up to his own expectations. Winning solid majorities of the popular vote, he worries that they are not greater—and he has, therefore, stacked both elections and the media. Although his rivals can hardly find a platform from which to oppose him, he persecutes those few who dare, methodically altering the law in order to suppress them.

Lee Kuan Yew once wept in public—in 1984, when the PAP won *only* 62% of the popular vote. Despite a 12% swing to the opposition, Singapore's artfully gerrymandered electoral districts gave it only two seats in a Parliament of 79 members. Nevertheless, Lee warned that the city-state stood in dire peril: Singapore would disintegrate if the People's Action Party ever lost power—and that he would not permit.[1]

The Prime Minister is arbitrary as well as hypersensitive, perhaps because he has never been tested to the utmost. The stage is too small and the demands of the drama too narrow. He has never found employment that would engage all his talents, despite talk of his becoming Secretary-General of the United Nations. The offer was never made—and might not have been accepted had it been, for Lee Kuan Yew could not subordinate himself to the pressures of 150 governments. Nor has he been offered prestige-laden assignments within the British Commonwealth, such as the intermediary's role which two Australian Prime Ministers played: Robert Menzies during the Suez Crisis in 1956, and John Fraser with South Africa. Lee Kuan Yew has for 30 years remained no more—and no less—than supreme ruler of Singapore and a spokesman for the South-east Asian region.

That static career has nothing to do with "racism", for both the UN and the Commonwealth are assertively non-racist. It has far more to do with his personality: abrasive, intolerant, impatient, and contemptuous of those who displease him. It may also be due to his politics. He has been the most outspoken foe in Asia of both Soviet and Chinese expansionism. Other politicians would speak favourably of the American presence in Viet Nam—in private. Only Lee Kuan Yew did so in public.

ABOVE ALL, I believe, Lee Kuan Yew frightens people with his intensity and his single-mindedness. He would have made a titanic wartime Prime Minister. When he was at war with the Communists he appeared happier than he does now. He has, in any event, conducted his

[1] The Prime Minister concluded that the One Man, One Vote system had thrown up "freak results". He then revamped the system, ostensibly to ensure a fair racial balance in Parliament. In "group constituencies", three candidates of the same party must now run together—and one must be of "a minority race"—Malay, Indian, or Eurasian. The opposition is usually hard-pressed to find one candidate, much less a mixed trio. The Party's monopoly of power has thus been preserved.

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peacetime Prime Ministership as if he were at war.

The greatest enemy of Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore may be none of the forces he fears—not Islamic fundamentalism, Japanese ambition, China's glacial southward movement, or his other bugbears. The greatest enemy may well be boredom.

The material paradise Lee has created is exceedingly monotonous. Most differentiation has been glossed over, and it is differences that give zest to life. When they are not over-achieving, many Singaporeans are bored stiff. Men and women in their twenties and thirties yearn aloud for the excitement and variety of the life their parents led in crowded *kampongs* and tenements. When I ask the Prime Minister about such vocal dissatisfaction, he replies: "They're just romanticising the past. There was no sanitation and no running water, hot or cold, for many not even electricity. . . . And what was there to do? The people could grow tapioca, make children, and drink."

Many residents on the Housing & Development Board's vast estates praise their safety for children, the convenience of their shopping centres, the refreshment of their swimming pools. Lee Kuan Yew cannot be faulted when he justifies his often intrusive role not only by Singapore's stability, but by the great material benefits he has brought to the country. Yet Singapore is no "Welfare State". The individual gets no guarantee of anything except the opportunity to advance by his own endeavours. "The function of government is to provide opportunity", says Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, the PAP's theoretician. "And that is the *only* responsibility of government."

Educating the people to utilise their opportunities is implicitly part of that responsibility. Even the school system is slowly being privatised, and all principals are being given greater autonomy. Nevertheless, all will assuredly foster only the approved ideology, with its "Asian values and Confucian ethics". "The people get used to the idea of buying what they need", explains Rajaratnam (once a passionate advocate of socialism). Repudiation of the Welfare State extends even to government health programmes. "If they don't pay for it", Rajaratnam tells me, "they can't get the best service. Eventually, every citizen will have his medicare in his savings."

Yet Lee Kuan Yew, ever the dedicated pragmatist, minutely controls the economy when necessary. The Central Provident Fund has forced individuals to save for their retirement—and to provide a pool of dollars for investment. Every working Singaporean must deposit 22-25% of his wages in an escrow account held by the government, which allows withdrawals on stringent terms. A few years ago, when the economy grew sluggish, the employer's matching contribution was reduced from 25 to 12% of the salary. In order to put more money in circulation, it was later raised to 16%. Rajaratnam notes: "It could go back to 25%. We can't have a Hong-Kong-style free-for-all here."

Control is selective. To promote economic growth, the government has from the beginning encouraged competition—on the government's terms. A free-enterprise economy was directed in an authoritarian manner, much as are the guided economies of South Korea and Japan. Today the government is selling off some of the quasi-public enterprises created with the Central Provident Fund. Efficiency is Singapore's Holy Grail—and nowadays efficiency requires privatisation.

Sinnathamby Rajaratnam shares the perception that has moved authoritarian régimes in Korea and Taiwan to relax their control over the economy. He, too, believes that, as the economy grows and everything gets so much more complicated, centralised direction becomes much less effective. "It's easy to govern in the beginning when you start low and a 10% gain means prosperity", he observes. "But affluence creates its own problems. Other South-east Asians are easily satisfied, unlike the Chinese. So we have the politics of envy. . . . When there are race riots in neighbouring countries—anti-Chinese or anti-Japanese race riots—they always burn motor-cars because cars are a symbol of affluence."

Settled by Chinese imported as labourers, Singapore now imports Filipinas to work as housemaids and chambermaids, Thais and Indonesians as construction workers, and Malaysians to collect its garbage. Unemployment among its citizens is 2 to 3%—effectively "full employment". The few unemployed also have a big cushion—a family, not a governmental, cushion. "Singaporeans would rather get jobs as hotel receptionists", Rajaratnam says. "When they're unemployed, they've got savings. So they can afford to wait till the right job comes along. If they don't have savings, their sisters, fathers, and brothers will.

Confucianism is clearly much more than rhetoric, for the family is central. Yet the extended family is being weakened by apartment-living and by the modern economy, which gives children financial independence early. There, too, diversity is slowly expiring, and life is becoming more limited. Boredom therefore threatens; diversion is badly needed. . . .

A year or so ago, almost by chance, a massive street party turned Orchard Road—the city's main artery—into the world's longest dance hall. Having already broken up a party for the anniversary of independence on 9 August, the police were not inclined to allow an even bigger party. But Lee Kuan Yew understood youth's need "to let off a bit of steam . . . to find something to do beyond the beaches and the shopping centres", as one father watching the madness observed. There was, the Prime Minister declared, no harm in a big party. "We've got to find new ways of expressing ourselves. And this is not only harmless, but may well do us good."

A quarter-of-a-million danced in the streets amid a bedlam of discos and bands. And Lee Kuan Yew undoubtedly approved when a denim-clad disc jockey, swung high in a cherry-picker festooned with Coca-Cola advertisements, led the throng in singing the refrain of the song *Count on Me, Singapore*: "We're going to show the world what Singapore can do. . . . We can achieve. . . . We can achieve."

NEO-CONFUCIANISM is promoted more assiduously in Singapore than anywhere else in Asia. Obedience to authority is *the* cardinal virtue, and the next is hard work for national betterment. The individual's responsibility to the state is constantly stressed, as is the necessity

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to subordinate personal goals to the needs of society. Because the Prime Minister fears that Singapore will become "a fake Western society", he lauds the strength of the family in Asia in contrast to the disintegration of the family in the West. Unlike its Confucian cousins, Taiwan and Korea, Singapore has recently become *more* authoritarian.

Dissidents look over their shoulders when they recall their time in prison. Francis Seow, a former Solicitor-General, is now in exile. When he rallied candidates to run against the People's Action Party, he was arrested under the all-purpose Internal Security Act. Yet, despite some brutality, such preventive detention is not generally harsh. Francis Seow was released to run in the general election. He narrowly lost. After flying to New York for medical treatment, he was tried *in absentia* for tax evasion. When he was fined $10,000, he was automatically disqualified from taking the non-voting seat which the PAP had created as "a consolation prize" for some defeated opposition candidates.

Speaking as a declared opponent of the régime, he says, "The time is coming when absolute totalitarianism is going to take over. You are witnessing a steady erosion of what little freedom we have got left." He was referring to the dismantling of legal safeguards for the rights of the individual.

Another opponent of the Prime Minister was convicted of fraud, disbarred, and expelled from Parliament. Sitting in London, the Privy Council (the highest judicial body of the British Commonwealth) described those actions as "grievous injustice". Inspired by other Privy Council rulings, the Singapore Appeals Court later released four alleged Marxist conspirators; but they were rearrested under the Internal Security Act as they walked out of the prison gates. The Prime Minister declared that the Privy Council should no longer have jurisdiction over Singapore, since it was ignorant of Singaporean affairs. He does not like listening to those who disagree with him.

State-run campaigns—not unlike those that repeatedly disrupted China under Chairman Mao—have imposed a degree of puritanical uniformity. No longer are male arrivals with long hair given haircuts at the airport; nor are they denied entry. But long-haired males are still served last in government offices. During the "Toilets of Shame" campaign, officials of the Ministry of the Environment, disguised as public-lavatory attendants, pounced on culprits who failed to flush after using. Photographs of the offenders being led away by the police were published in the *Straits Times* in order to humiliate them.

The "Two-Child Campaign" was a very serious matter. Additional children were to be denied education—a powerful threat in an achievement-driven Chinese community. Parents were cowed—and not only with regard to birth control. The managing director of the local branch of an international company confided plaintively, "I'd like to run for the opposition. But I know my sons wouldn't get into the right schools. How can I do that to them?"

Later, however, the "two-child" policy was revised. A grim-faced Lee Kuan Yew warned on television that Singaporeans were not efficiently reproducing themselves. Fewer young workers might soon have to support a large number of the retired. Suddenly the slogan was "Have three children—more if you can afford it." It was clearly addressed to the Chinese, who might otherwise in time find their numerical preponderance overtaken by the fecund Malays.

A related campaign sprang from Lee's discovery of eugenics and the heredity principle. The "quality" of Singapore's people was declining, he lamented, because educated women married late; and, in any event, educated men preferred less-educated wives. Women with degrees were therefore exhorted to marry earlier. The Ministry of Communications & Information set up a "Social Development Unit" to encourage men and women with good examination grades to meet and get to know each other (purpose: matrimony). Television ads showed an old lady sitting alone in her rocking-chair, sipping tea disconsolately. A voice-over expressed her regret for having been "too aggressive". Her "success-oriented exterior", she said, had driven away potential husbands.

The Prime Minister's sudden passion for creating something of a super-race was served, as are all his passions, by a government bureaucracy and a Party apparatus that have become almost indistinguishable. Civil servants, the judiciary, and government agencies are all beholden to—or subsumed in—the PAP. Even the National Trades Union Congress, which is not *officially* an organ of the state or the Party, threatens to expel anyone who supports the opposition.

Potential opposition candidates are intimidated by arrest and imprisonment. They are, the PAP says dismissively, usually "taxi drivers"—that calling being a last refuge of individualism in homogenised Singapore. But the National Trades Union Conference sends out *agents-provocateurs* to draw drivers into political discussions. Those caught criticising the government are given "detriment points" on their employment records. If they get too many demerits, they are fired.

The Housing & Development Board can, in theory, enforce good behaviour. Yet residents' committees modelled on the "Street Committees" of totalitarian China are largely ignored. However, American and British sociologists regularly make studies to determine why the HDB projects are orderly and clean, even happy—unlike the crime-terrorised, stinking, high-rise tenements of New York and London. I believe the reason is the neo-Confucian moral consensus instilled by example and, to a certain extent, by fear in a largely Chinese populace. Dispersing Malays and Indians among those Chinese, has, moreover, alleviated the ghetto mentality and moderated the ethnic fear sprung of ignorance that once fomented ugly race riots.

WHATEVER THE OUTSIDERS' (and insiders') criticism of the régime, Singapore is, for the great majority, a very pleasant place to live. Life may be dull and unadventurous, but it is also secure and orderly. Food is abundant and varied, as are consumer goods. The streets are spotless, and the crowds are well behaved. Crime is not a serious problem; families are not disintegrating; and addicted young people do not loll on the sidewalks or in shopping centres.

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The golden haze of legend that once enveloped Singapore (from the Sanskrit *Singapura*, "City of the Lion") has dissipated. But the exotic and mysterious Singapore ridden by Oriental vice and crime always existed more in the minds of romantic Westerners than in reality. Those crooked alleys radiating from the typhoon drains were not the haunts of desperate men and loose women, but the homes of poor families striving to make an honest living.

Nowadays the streets are straight, and the broad boulevards flow with traffic that is heavy, but always orderly. A smooth six-lane expressway swoops north to the narrow straits that divide the island from peninsular Malaysia. Other expressways swing along the coast, where green parks with enormous seafood restaurants overlook the beaches. One darts straight to the new airport in formerly remote Changi, where once stood only a grim prison—and stalls serving delectable crabs and shrimps.

Changi Airport is a new architectural form quite unlike hackneyed, look-alike airports elsewhere. High-roofed like a modern cathedral, it was the first airport to sell duty-free liquor *on arrival*. Spacious, quiet, and competently run, it does not induce tension, but soothes. That notable diligence which mirrors the remarkable efficiency of Singapore was presaged one April day some nine years ago. The driver taking me to Paya Lebar Airport told me cheerfully that next time I would be using Changi, opening in June. Aside from finishing touches, he added, only five miles of express-way needed to be built. I was astonished, and doubted that the work could ever be finished in time. "This is Singapore", the driver said. "It will be finished."

It was. Such efficiency is even manifest in the bureaucracy—of all places. Individuals' identity cards, passports, and driving licences all bear the same number. Such foresight and competence would make totalitarianism easy to impose. But Singapore is no more likely to become truly totalitarian than it is to become truly democratic.

Singapore is convenient, comfortable, orderly. The precisely spaced orchid stalls under the equidistant palm trees on Bukit Timah Road attract shoppers leaving the big Cold Storage Supermarket, which stocks seven foreign beers (as well as Singapore's own Anchor and Tiger) and six flavours of Perrier. By American or European standards, prices are very low.

The parking lot opposite Fitzpatrick's Supermarket, where strictly licensed foodstalls set up at night, is an asphalt patch amid the glass and steel high-rises that have transformed once bucolic Orchard Road. But the smells are sweeter, or at least more pungent, than in most big cities. Here and there a green vista opens suddenly. Lee Kuan Yew wonders if he has left enough grassy parks and squares in his rush to prosperity and modernity. Though perhaps not enough, he has left many.

Throngs of pedestrians are free and easy, calling loudly to each other, chattering and laughing. I sense no constraint, no repression, no fear. They are totally unlike the subdued, almost furtive, unsmiling pedestrians I have seen in Peking, Moscow, and Bucharest. Graceful in crisp cotton dresses, women walk happily at midnight amid crowds of young men in starched white shirts and cotton trousers. They are inhibited neither by traditional Oriental prudishness nor by modern fear of violence.

The movie theatres spill their audiences on to neon-brilliant side-walks. The crowds climb the slender bridges that cross the light-streaked avenues or wait for the big red-and-white buses that arrive precisely on schedule. Multi-storey shopping centres compete for customers, offering at very low prices the usual enticements: hi-fis and cameras, binoculars and silks, custom-made clothing and jewellery, luggage, curios, and furs. Singapore does not enchant the visitor with its old and exotic charms, although a section of old Chinatown, a Hindu temple, and a few mosques still stand. Nor does it enchant Singaporeans; but they are a matter-of-fact lot.

The average Singaporean is mundane and prosaic. Not for him or her the flights of imagination that make great art and sometimes great fortunes. Besides, the comfortable uniformity fostered by the Mother-Knows-Best government does not inspire creativity. Yet that lack has not visibly impaired the working of the economy. Ingenuity there is in plenty, chiefly among the protégés of the Prime Minister. And ingenuity has created a dynamic—if not too sturdy—economic machine.

SINGAPORE'S PROSPERITY is based primarily upon two enterprises, electronics and oil, as well as its vast entrepôt trade. Second to Hong Kong, which it has never been able to overtake, Singapore is also the regional centre of financial services ranging from insurance and letters of credit to complex loans, foreign-exchange trading, and stock flotations—all at minimum cost. As Hong Kong approaches ingestion by the People's Republic of China in June 1997, some of its abundant talent and capital is flowing to Singapore. But by no means all. For the time being, the city-state depends largely on services and light industry, with virtually no indigenous entrepreneurial base for manufacturing.

When the price of oil falls, Singapore suffers badly. Profit from the big refineries declines—and there is an exodus of the foreign oil-men, mostly Americans, who work the Indonesian rigs but prefer to keep their offices and their families in super-clean Singapore.

Japan is investing in Singapore because it is efficient and strategically placed. But the Japanese are, as everywhere, reluctant to transfer the advanced technology Singapore wants—and has now secured from European and American investors like Phillips and Rollei, who are themselves hard-pressed by the Japanese. The Prime Minister loathes depending on the Japanese, who, as he knows from wartime experience, can be uncomfortable bedfellows. He worries about the departure of US commerce and investment, as well as the withdrawal of American military power.

As he says, Singapore's base is too narrow. Hampered by that lack of breadth, Singapore also lacks flexibility. Hong Kong and Taiwan, where small manufacturers predominate, can readily switch product lines or retrench against recession. With its bigger enterprises and its massively foreign investment base, Singapore cannot move as fast. A big fall in the demand for computers would badly hurt the city-state

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whose biggest non-petroleum export is more than half the world's disc-drives, worth about $2.5 billion a year.

Yet Singapore Ltd., the public and private sectors responding in concert to the Prime Minister's baton, can react very effectively to challenges—from the top down. It did so in 1985, when the government created a recession and retarded growth by allowing wages to rise too fast. Costs were then cut across the board, and money was released by reducing contributions to the Central Provident Fund. Within a year, growth had resumed at 8 to 9%. But by 1989 the government was forced to throttle back. Growth was simply too fast to sustain. Again, the Provident Fund and other levers were adroitly adjusted. Money was withdrawn from circulation by higher contributions, but was available for large-scale investment under government direction.

THE KEY IS THE MAN who began this account and now closes it. Although outsiders may look askance at him, Lee Kuan Yew is, to most Singaporeans, a figure out of legend, their only leader and their only mentor. By and large, Lee Kuan Yew rules with his people's consent, for his party generates fervent loyalty. He is an Oliver Cromwell without a Bible, a prophet without a creed. He sincerely wants a tolerant government that interferes with individuals only to the extent necessary to prevent their interfering with others' well-being and property. Although his ideas of tolerance and non-interference differ markedly from most Westerners', he is not an extremist among Asian autocrats. He is simply more efficient, more honest, more open.

The social covenant between the government and the overseas Chinese, who feel isolated and vulnerable in the Southern Seas (the colloquial Chinese term for South-east Asia), is straightforward. Above all, they want security of life and property. They want government stability and an environment in which they can work hard with the expectation of good returns. They want to educate their children to do even better than they have done. In the absence of heavy-handed, extensive repression, they continue to vote for the régime that provides those essentials.

However, the younger generation, unlike its parents, does not respond viscerally to the dangers to which the Prime Minister constantly points. Youth takes stability, security, and economic opportunity for granted and yearns for other things—even if it is not quite sure what those things are. Lee Kuan Yew is not, to that new generation, the legendary hero he is to their parents. Intellectuals dislike him, and he irritates executives and professionals. None the less, the People's Action Party is probably secure for a decade—unless some catastrophe intervenes.

Even the apostolic succession is in place. Unlike many despots, Lee Kuan Yew has not shrunk from selecting a successor; and, like some despots, he has chosen his son. But Lee Hsien Loong (his name means "the Dragon Apparent") will be only 38 years old this year. The Prime Minister evidently plans to retire to the office of President, whose powers he has greatly enlarged. He intends initially to be succeeded by Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who has been his understudy for years. If the master plan works, as the Prime Minister's plans generally do, Goh will in turn be succeeded by Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong.

The heir presumptive attained that rank on his retirement from the armed forces after just thirteen years service, six of them spent as a student at Harvard and Cambridge. Lee Kuan Yew's passion for eugenics—the selection of the brightest and best by their birthlines—convinces him that his son is his natural successor. Who else but Lee Hsien Loong has inherited the unique talents of Lee Kuan Yew?

Wags speak of "the Holy Trinity": the Father, the Son, and the Holy Goh. As that formula implies, Lee Kuan Yew will exercise decisive influence as long as he is capable, regardless of the title he bears. His own father, Singaporeans point out with some alarm, is still robust, although well past eighty. Until Lee Kuan Yew dies, Singapore will follow the course he has mapped—spiritless, passionless, but content in a small lion's share of happiness.

Think Of The Old

Think of the old in their overfurnished rooms,
Nests of fretwork tables spelling disaster
To the teacups of occasional visitors,
Little lacquer mats and china cats, like the Egyptian tombs
With everything down to a toothbrush, as if
The afterlife were a long seaside visit.
So death is just another place to go
And the chalky body's in training for a stiff.

To the young this is eerie. Their living spaces
Are all contingent. *Anywhere I hang my hat*
Is home. Possessions strewn, melamine bookshelves
Up on housebricks beckoning. A place is
For starting from. The old have had all that; they know
What happens to us is ourselves.

John Whitworth

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John Greening

Nightflights

Then (the Mauls say) the only airport here
Was Heston, where Mr Chamberlain took off
For Munich. They had heard the peaceful cough
Of his pistons from their greenhouse, whose bleared
Panes crack with Boeings now so I can't hear
Their words about the War, but see the rough
Remains of their shelter and the stone cover
To their well, and wish. . . But my parents' fear

Permits me only to dream of those unseen
Dark places. Nightflights wink into the west
Across our hawthorn-hedge, towards a Heath
Silence has stamped out like something obscene.
I go to bed, and with a tightening chest
Lie there, wait, listen, and invent a myth.

The Cedars at Highclere

I see him in the distance. The stories he tells them
waft across to me as I trim the lawns beneath his cedars.

He loves cedars: his father asked my father to put them in.
The Egyptians made all their tables and chairs out of cedar,

he told me once, were buried surrounded by it. Now he's
alone on that fancy verandah, reading, or glancing up towards

these living crowns—always some fat volume open beside him.
That's (he'd say) since forty days stuck out in the tropical seas

with so little to do, between fighting off pirates
and avoiding hurricanes, that he fell prey to the bookworm.

But we know. In the old days he would never have stopped
still long enough to have turned a leaf. If it wasn't the sea,

it was the turf; if it wasn't the latest horseless carriage,
it was some infernal air machine. Faster, always faster, until

Trotman comes running to pluck him out from that blazing wreck
in the Black Forest—head smashed, heart stopped.

And all he wanted to know was had he killed anybody!
Next thing, he is making Highclere a home for war-wounded,

young lads cowering behind this shadow-line: muttering, wide-eyed
ghost battalions. M'lord was never one to let the grass grow.

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Today he showed us another of his latest photographs—one of
a mummified cat, which wasn't at all well received by his dog—

nor by her Ladyship, for that matter. But then, we all have doubts
about this digging-up of times long gone. The papers make jokes

about the thousands he has wasted (with 36,000 acres
here to keep) and to my own thinking, when there's talk of a curse

you think twice. He's already had a good nine lives—chased
by a wild elephant in South Africa (more of an achievement

to have escaped than shot it, he said!), then only last week
rushed to the hospital with three quarters of an hour to live.

When he dies, it will be in a way nobody could have foreseen.
"I don't think I've lost my nerve", he whispered, straight

after that accident. And he won't let anyone wrap him up
in bandages. "I want to be buried", he laughs, "out in the open,

high up on Beacon Hill, then—if you like—" to us, he calls us
his garden angels!—"plant one of de Havilland's DH9s

above me like a Pyramid; and make sure the grave is dug
by a professional archaeologist!" Tomorrow he's off out

to the East again. The last season, he has announced.
"If the Pharaohs don't bite, the mosquitoes certainly will."

Alan Dixon

Hand of Pork

Wigster, my cat, sniffs roast pork under the door.
Most of the smell has fallen to the floor
And flows out from the pantry where it's cooling.
He has been given skin but is still drooling
In expectation of more. What would he do
If I dropped the joint on the floor for him to chew?
He'd drag it, ripping bits off, till he was bored.
Instead of biting hand of pork he has just gnawed
The hand that feeds him. When the joint is safe
Inside the fridge he'll wait for the carving knife
To rise in silhouette beside the fork
To worry to the bone his hand of pork,
Showing his pink mouth, soundless, feigning need.
No human could so charm me with his greed.

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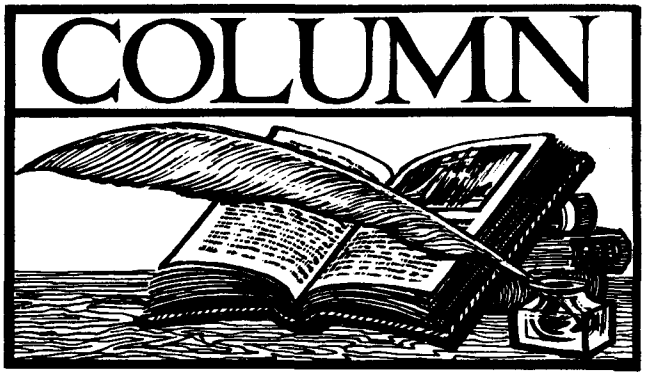

FUN HOGHE? Vah Gogue? Van Goff? Or Van Go? It all depends whether you're Dutch, French, British, or American. But in any language or pronunciation, Vincent van Gogh used always to spell SUNFLOWERS.

Not any more. From now until the end of July in Amsterdam, the name spells almost anything. Van Gogh ashtrays, neckties, tea-caddies, postage stamps, kitchen towels, T-shirts, scatter cushions, throw rugs, tram-cars, plastic shopping bags—any object that can take colour reproduction glares and bristles back at you, aping that parched hot palette, those nervous brush-strokes. Weirdest of all is an opportunist wine-label, on a minor claret quite surprisingly bland. From its centre, van Gogh stares out in a baleful, guilty self-portrait. Above his head, the wine's title is a lamentable double pun: *"Le Vin-Cent Jubilé"*. This year, of course, is the centenary of his death.

Being promoted like Pooh Bear or Peter Rabbit might seem the final indignity—short, that is, of the Van Gogh Personal Stereo with only one earpiece. Already, prints and posters have turned anguished, passionate paintings into mere features of the décor, too familiar by half. Yet there's just a chance that, despite the razzmatazz, van Gogh may actually not be turning in his grave. He always wanted his work to be seen in its entirety; and the centrepiece of the current Dutch celebrations is the finest and fullest retrospective it's ever likely to get. "Merits a detour", if you're in Europe; "Worth the journey", if not.

Pace André Malraux and his *musée imaginaire*, there's no substitute for looking at originals—especially of oils. Even the twin catalogues of the current exhibition, one for the drawings on display at Otterlo, the other for the paintings in Amsterdam, barely do justice to the reality they depict. Even full-sized facsimiles can't manage it—as witness the dazzling *Fake?* exhibition at the British Museum. So feast your eyes on canvases you thought you knew from a hundred living-rooms: the stubby yellow rush chair in odd perspective on a floor of earthenware tiles; the crackling sunflowers; the two versions of the Langlois Bridge; the twisted cypresses in those late landscapes of the writhing sun. What you'll see is subtle multiplicity, showing how many separate colours van Gogh worked with, how well he juxtaposed them in total contrast to give a natural effect. The tiles in the chair picture are a salad of incongruous smudges, but unmistakably real. The paint could have been applied this morning.

There's fascination, too, in watching van Gogh grope. In the early part of his French career, he can turn you out fake Sisleys or Pissarros, or feebler imitations of Seurat—but not for long. Soon, some inner compulsion erupts into the pretty pictures. In *The Railway Bridge over Avenue Montmajour*, the bare solid walls wrench and bludgeon the viewer: the subject's skewed as no postcard, no placid landscape painter, would ever see it. A vast empty foreground crowds the bridge backward; the road on the left howls into the distance, territory for Edvard Munch. *The Tarascon Diligence* is equally upsetting, like an amateur snapshot with the camera badly aimed—huge foreground, crippled perspective, squeezed subject, wheels cropped by the frame. But muscle has replaced *pointillisme*. We're on the way to the "real" van Gogh.

And it's precisely there that I'd like to mutter a heresy. Must we assume, as with Verdi and Beethoven, that the latest works are the best?

They're certainly the best known—wild, surging, sealike landscapes that churn the stomach, frenzied battles against time and illness, primitive shorthand whose apparent naivety nods at Douanier Rousseau. In the midst of the storm, sudden stability in a garden or cornfield, or a heavy, solid portrait: yet all the time this rush-matting brushwork, these lumpy horseshoe shapes to denote leaves. With such a huge output, and such high prices, it's surprising there aren't more van Gogh forgeries around. They shouldn't be difficult to produce. And if someone retorts that no forger could emulate van Gogh's vision—well, look how long it took eminent scholars and critics to see through van Meegeren's flaccid "Vermeers".

To me, the revelation of the whole show was its first half: the 250 drawings and the early paintings collected at Otterlo. Many, to be sure, are no strangers: a reproduction of one of them, some rather dull cottages, hung on the wall of my student rooms for about three years. All date from what might be called "the dark brown period", before the Impressionist sun burst in on van Gogh's earthy palette. Some even very early drawings show traces of the later rippling line: but the strongest of those youthful pictures are made of taut curves like scythe blades or the oblique sails of windmills; and their subjects are the bent backs and braced legs of men and women weighed down by work. Sympathy and social conscience give the series powerful emotion: but purely as visual art, if such judgment is possible, its strength is immense.

ONE LANDSCAPE in particular gripped my attention. Sadly, reproductions fail it. If words can help, it's a watercolour at nightfall, with the sun gone but its afterglow still leaving hints of colour in the approaching darkness. In the foreground, a sluggish stream reflects the dying faint pink in a grey-yellow sky. On its banks, the bushes nestle, a blurred dark green: there could be birds in them, settling for the night. Above, the meadows breathe the possibility of an evening mist; in the distance, a paler green looks damp. Almost dead centre, gloomy as peat, stands a rough cottage shape that might be a hut or a haystack—it's getting too dark to be sure. On the skyline, still deep russet in the failing light, village houses and a square church tower, far from us here in the watery meadow, closing down with no lamps

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yet visible, a promise of shelter, a meal, and a bed, rough comforts in a countryside growing chilly, inhospitable, no longer ours.

Personally, I get more from a sombre, atmospheric painting like that than from many of van Gogh's primary-coloured, wheat-haunted later frenzies. *Landscape at Nightfall* breaks no new ground, it's true: it works within a Northern tradition stretching back to the so-called Old Masters, and has nothing in common with van Gogh's Pauline conversion to neo- or post-Impressionism. Its typically humid Dutch light even has affinities with Proust's favourite painting, Vermeer's *View of Delft*. Yet there's no doubt that what enthrals both the professionals and the public is van Gogh's later achievement, when his palette deserted northern humus browns and spinach greens for corn-yellow, brick-pink, Reckitt's blue, apple-green, and Monet purple.

Clearly, there's joy in liberation—from naturalism, from the academy, and from simple gloom. Clearly, van Gogh's virtue was originality, wresting a synthesis out of all that he had learned. Yet when some of his last frantic works are compared with his sober early efforts, it's hard not to feel that something, too, has been lost. May it not be that van Gogh's illness, while contributing to his vision, also weakened his art?

"NOBODY enjoys long lines for tickets", say the exhibition's organisers, explaining their advance booking system, "nor is it enjoyable to see more people than paintings." Well, no: but watching the crowd can certainly spark off speculation. What struck me most about the throng besieging these tortured paintings was the contrast between what they saw and what they themselves seemed to be.

There were, to be sure, occasional eccentrics, dressed like artists in 19th-century novels or 20th-century Aspen, Colorado. But most of the visitors were solid, respectable, sane-looking citizens like your columnist—especially the Dutch. I don't know why it is, but most of the Dutch women there over the age of 30 seemed to look like my mother, while most of their Dutch menfolk looked like my old headmaster. Yet here they were, absorbing the dangerous aura coming off these astonishing pictures, queuing to buy reproductions of them, and obviously satisfying, as we all were, some very deep-seated need. An adventure playground or a season in hell?

I suspect a little of both. In Britain, with asphalt and concrete steadily invading the countryside, the sense of being trapped in creeping suburbia is already powerful. In the Netherlands, surely, things must be worse. One of the most densely populated countries in the world, it continually needs to reclaim land from the sea. Amsterdam has a housing shortage that eclipses London's. And the Dutch style of living, as recorded in countless paintings and preserved in towns like Haarlem, has always been tiny and cheek-by-jowl. Look at the minute gardens in Hobbema's pictures: look at the narrow houses along Amsterdam's canals. Look, even, at the neat modern villas and "town houses" in the Dutch countryside. They all betoken restraint and civic sense and the need to get on with one's neighbours—and to live in a very restricted space. Some of the older houses used to be organised inside with the minute precision of the cabins aboard a small cruising yacht, with clothes *rolled up* and squeezed into boxes. Is it any wonder that the Dutch language, as commonly used, is studded with diminutives?

Order, tidiness, thrift, hard work: the bourgeois virtues can be exhausting. Perhaps that's why, some years ago, Amsterdam became the hippy centre of Northern Europe, and why it still seems to cater unashamedly for extremely marginal tastes. Its red-light district, nowadays, is billed as a tourist attraction—which seems about as cruel as zoos. Outside that seedy quarter, ordinary-looking shops offer condoms in all shapes, colours, and flavours, as well as picture-postcards with animals' jaws superimposed on female pudenda. At least one bordello is said to take "all major credit cards"; and various drugs are allegedly available at cafés that most taxi-drivers can name.

Since my last visit some years ago, some things have certainly changed. Students' hair is shorter (if that has any significance), and the smell of hash has virtually gone from the streets. Muggings, however, are still reported in the Vondelpark after dark; and on a couple of occasions I encountered derisive roughnecks who might have been refugees from *Easy Rider*. For those in search of the 1960s, then, the Netherlands may still offer some vestiges of promise. But the general tenor of life, even in Amsterdam, is peaceful, friendly, relaxed, and very well-organised. Everything goes like clockwork, as in the miniature city of Madurodam—another characteristic Dutch delight.

Is it quite fanciful, then, to imagine that part of van Gogh's appeal—to the Dutch especially, but not exclusively—lies in the contrast he offers with the life that most people lead? In his art, certainly: but also, and perhaps more commonly, in his life. The later pictures make a clear break with northern sobriety and even sanity. And van Gogh's career—of which everyone knows something—is in many respects the paradigm of that popular stereotype, the artist-as-genius, and mad.

Lust for Life was the brilliantly chosen title of Irving Stone's biographical novel, based mainly on the letters: but the book is less trumpery than the title suggests. (The film, with Kirk Douglas, is another matter.) What's certain is that memories of both book and film lend highly romantic colour to the image of van Gogh in many people's minds—and thereby to their notion of the creative process.

Solitary—a misfit—with religious yearnings—quarrelsome—wistful—an idealist—a bit of a sponger—unhappy in love, but highly sexed—embracing low life and contracting syphilis—struck by an artistic revelation—seeking friendship—losing it—losing sanity—taking to an asylum—cutting off an ear—shooting himself. An appalling record, if it weren't for the treasury of work; and one that reads like the life-story of some Somerset Maugham character. So *that's* what artists are like! Don't send your daughter to the studio, Mrs Worthington: but what a wonderful read.

And like most such good reads, it leaves out the essentials. In van Gogh's case, two of them were effort and pain.

The effort is abundant in the *Letters*. First, their sheer bulk and number. Some, it's true, are essentially fund-

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raising: but van Gogh does more than wrap up that sordid purpose—he forgets it as he chatters on. Then there's his voluminous reading. This artist is no *fainéant*: when he's not working, he's at his books. And finally, essentially, there's the patient, conscious, conscientious effort to improve his craft. Endless studies; copies of masters like Millet; academic work under Mauve and others; apprenticeship to the Impressionists; solitary hard graft and multiple versions of famous pictures, worked on till he's satisfied, experimenting all the time. This is a life as busy as a bank clerk's: no lilies and languors, and precious few roses and raptures, at that.

The pain was there from the beginning. Pain at rejection; guilt at displeasing his father, even when defying him; sorrow at loss of vocation; hurt at commercial failure; sporadic shame at relying on his brother; mistrust of his own career, especially when his early work's dismissed as old-fashioned; unease with a new palette and new techniques. But then come the effects of illness—the body weak, the brain baffled, emotions brimming over, self-destruction, self-disgust. It's not genius that makes people kill themselves. It's despair.

Yet on some readings of van Gogh's life it might be supposed that the Artist, as such readings tend to capitalise him or her, lives on the borders of madness, probing into worlds that ordinary mortals dare not broach. The same assumptions are made about some jazz musicians and some novelists, whose weaknesses (and poisons) are mistaken for their strengths. But drugs killed Charlie Parker: they didn't improve his playing. Drink killed Malcolm Lowry: without it, or with less of it, he might have written more than his single masterpiece, *Under the Volcano*. So, likewise, with Vincent van Gogh. Perhaps his greatest paintings were the product of his asylum years, perhaps not: that can be a matter of taste, judgment, and dispute. But if they were, and even if they weren't, I believe that the best works of that period were those in which his illness had abated somewhat; and I still question whether we don't read too much of what we know into what we see. As G. K. Chesterton might have put it—and possibly did: "Only the foolish believe that a great artist must be a holy madman. To contemplate unflinchingly the holy madness of reality, an artist must above all be supremely sane." Sane enough, at least, to bear the prospect of cigarettes being stubbed out on his face in a porcelain ashtray.

M

Fishing with Casper (Sweden, 1986)

Ringed by shadow-heads of pines
we drift over Stromaren, Lake of Storms,
in bright nippy air, trailing

Old Pike, the one who never fails
to get away. Casper gives
the rod to me, hoping for stranger's

luck, rows us from point to point
where, he says, fish abound. As
the line grows heavy I pull in my catch,

a clump of tangled reeds. Through
the swift-darkening afternoon, forest
closing in, my friend consoles me,

certain there will be no fish-fry
back in Orbyhus tonight, where his wife
and children wait us in their sprawling

house inside the castle grounds. There,
over schnapps, sharp herring, moose,
crisp tart snowberries we laugh together,

chat of icefishing and poems, canny pike
and bass, still warmed by light-arrows
piercing water, a moment of October sun.

Lucien Stryk

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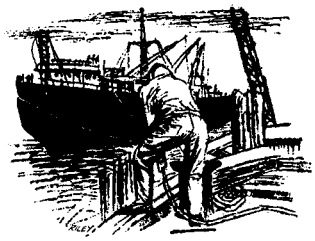
NOTES & TOPICS

Ireland in Liverpool

By Roy Kerridge



HARSH ORANGE lights shining through the portholes warned me that the ferry from Dublin had reached the River Mersey in the twilight. The docks at Bootle, where the boat came in, are rather dreary. One or two other ships stood nearby. I little knew at that time that the ferry between Dublin and Liverpool was to be abolished. Liverpool, of course, is part of Ireland.

A taxi swiftly transported me to the YMCA at Mount Pleasant, where once I had stayed for three happy months. To my horror, there was no room available that night. Before dragging my bag out into the darkness, I had a look around the dear old place. Juke-box and football table had vanished from the lounge, where a group of Hare Krishnas with shaven heads were speaking in loud Liverpudlian accents. Mark Foot's motorbike was still parked outside, and soon my old crony turned up, this time wearing a beard. He told me he was going out with a nurse, so his YMCA days are probably numbered.

After a chat about old times, I set off to comb Mount Pleasant's cheap hotels for a room. Outside a pub, draymen lifted metal kegs up from the cellar, through a trapdoor, using large hooks, one held in each hand. They looked like pirates. I soon found an hotel and dragged my bag up narrow stairs. A baleful-eyed prostitute stepped from a doorway on my landing. My tiny room was stifling hot, and the bed felt like a board of wood. A notice warned me not to try to open the window. Fortunately, although the window was stuck, the room was ventilated by a wide jagged crack across the pane.

I scarcely minded these petty annoyances, for I was glad to be back in this exciting city. Quickly unpacking, I set out for the Irish Centre, near the top of Mount Pleasant hill. A strange building, the Centre had been converted from the former Assembly Rooms, built when this Georgian neighbourhood was new.

Sidling past the doorman and the table of Irish newspapers from every county, I made for the great ballroom. However, there was a private party on that night, and a bouncer stopped me. So I sat in the café, where good-looking youngsters of fifteen or sixteen, girls and boys, were chasing one another round the tables. Despite generations of grim Liverpool life, they looked as if they had come straight from Ireland. Bag-pipes and drums sounded from the ballroom, and a rich sentimental voice sang *A Nation Once Again*.

"I gave up smoking for Lent, and it nearly killed me", a nervy chain-smoking housewife at the next table told her friend. She went on to talk of a Halloween party with apple-bobbing, for Liverpool's Irish influence has kept such customs alive.

In the Centre shop, I looked at Claddagh rings and Country and Western records, until I was interrupted by two cheerful girls from the party. "It's all Irish things here!" one exclaimed in disappointment. "Mind you, my grandfather was Irish."

Later that night, the private party went public, and amidst the swirling speckled lights of the ballroom I watched young pretty nuns dancing to the fiddle and accordion music of a *ceilidh* band. Up on the stage, a schoolgirl in a white blouse and bright green skirt sang haunting ballads.

A visit next day to the Maritime Museum at the Albert Dock made clear the reason why Liverpool is an outpost of Ireland. Albert Dock, on the Mersey, has now been repainted, repaired and spruced up, but it is a dock no longer. Sturdy Victorian workmanship, with huge columns supporting warehouses on wharves, has been profaned by Covent-Garden-style shops and hole-infested modern art. Rents are high, and the shops are already going out of business.

The Maritime Museum occupies a large corner of the dock, indoors and out. Inside a former warehouse, I walked around the impressive "Emigration" exhibit. A statue in the entrance depicted an anxious Irish couple, dressed in the style of the 1840s, about to embark on a one-way voyage to America to escape the Famine. Caused by a sudden potato-blight, the Famine decimated rural Ireland. According to the exhibit-notes, between 1845 and 1849 one-and-a-quarter-million people went from Ireland to America. Many of them sailed by way of Liverpool. Thousands of families found themselves stranded in that city, unable to afford the fare to the United States. Liverpool no longer considers itself English in the way that (say) Manchester is English. It is to England what Glasgow is to Scotland, a part-Irish city.

SOFT IRISH MUSIC played in the background. I gazed at a model of a mountain farm before the Famine—a stone and thatch hut and a potato patch, set in glorious scenery. Various cases, lit up in the darkness, showed different aspects of emigration. Finally, the museum passage opened out into a large, dimly-lit hall, a complete reconstruction of the emigrants' sleeping quarters in the wooden depths of a sailing ship. Seagull cries and the sound of waves blended with ghostly murmuring, coughing, and infant wailing on the sound-track.

On raised platforms round the room, bestraddled by ship timbers, blankets lay in rows—the emigrants' beds. In a corner, a period waxwork stood at a writing desk as if wondering what to say. My only criticism of the exhibit was that the sides of the ship seemed too stripped-piney and smart for such a hell-like voyage.

Outside, on the quay, an old grizzled beggar held his hat

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out in the rain. Mothers with children hurried into the new Tate Gallery to see an art exhibition labelled *Penguins*. They little knew that the paintings inside were not portraits of lovable birds at the zoo but ludicrous abstract daubings by Australians of dubious sanity. Modern art exists to spite and taunt the public.

As I scurried back to Mount Pleasant, I wished that "the dockers' umbrella" was still in use. Older Liverpudlians fondly remember the overhead railway to the docks, in the days when thousands of men were employed there. Those who did not ride on the trains walked to work in bad weather below the curving raised platform that led down to the river and stretched from dock to dock.

IN GENERAL, the tone of the Maritime Museum is favourable to Trade Unionism. It may as well be, for if there had been no trade unions there would have been no Museum. Albert Dock would still have been a dock, full of dockers, sailors, and ships.

1955 was a year of portent for Liverpool. In that year the docks were crippled by the so-called Teddy Boys' Strike. Two young seamen were dismissed for playing guitars when they should have been working on board a ship berthed in the docks. The resulting strike began the process whereby Liverpool was to change from a seafarers' city to a rock and roll town. Unfortunately, beat music proved not so durable a way of life as loading, unloading, and signing-on merchant vessels. Pop music museums now rival marine museums in the workless, tourist-starved city.

Although one of the museum exhibits had shown old photographs of out-of-work Negro dockers among crowds of unemployed men, there had been no mention of the pogrom of 1919. In that year, mobs of work-hungry white dockers and sailors had attacked coloured men on sight, creating a mood of terror among seafaring Africans, West Indians, and long-naturalised "Liverpool coloured".

To this day, Liverpool is the only English city with something approaching a ghetto. Plenty of white people live in Liverpool Eight (or Toxteth) but very few coloured people live outside it. There are surprisingly few dark faces in the smart city centre. Smart black English office girls and shop assistants, the mainstay of London and Birmingham, are seldom seen in Liverpool. When I took a London friend to the normally peaceful Irish Centre, some youths called him a "nigger".

Musing on such themes, I walked up to Granby Street, the "Liverpool Eight Front Line". By now the rain had stopped. Racial themes are by no means out of place in a consideration of Irish Liverpool. Most of the first generation of "Liverpool coloured" had Irish mothers and West African fathers. That is why some people jokingly refer to themselves as "Leprecoons". A joke in poor taste, it shows awareness of the undeniable fact that the "Liverpool coloured" have Irish traits and mannerisms. Some such mannerisms are those of the Northern Irish.

Back streets and new council estates of Liverpool often form miniature Belfasts, with Orange Protestant and Republican Catholic quarters. Fights take place along the borders, such as the Scotland Road (R.C.) and Great Homer Street (Presbyterian) divide. So Liverpool Eight and Granby Street are part of a grand Liverpool tradition. All the same, I was surprised to see, in Granby Street, the kerbs painted in blocks of green, yellow and black, the Rastafarian colours. In exactly the same way, Protestants in Belfast paint kerbstones red, white and blue. Terrace-ends were decorated in Rasta styles reminiscent of Catholic and Protestant symbols in Northern Ireland.

Few Rastas could be seen, although one leaned out of a doorway and sang a ditty in praise of marijuana almost in my ear. Young "Liverpool coloured", heads shaven skinhead style, were working with great excitement at creating a huge Guy Fawkes bonfire on a piece of waste ground. These wild young boys reminded me of the bonfire-building youths of Belfast's Protestant areas. At the instigation of an older "activist community worker", the guy was dressed as a policeman.

In London and the Midlands, "black community leaders" are middle-aged men and women who sit in offices. Most are fairly approachable. Liverpool, however, has developed a frightening, almost gangster-like style of "black leadership", reminiscent of sectarian groups in Northern Ireland. Both council bureaucrats, some of whom finance the "leaders", and humble coloured people who live in or near Granby Street seem terrified of the official council-backed "black leaders". A black English girl I know, who came to Liverpool to do research on a book, was held prisoner for a time by "activists" in a Granby Street pub. One of them was the university lecturer she had first contacted.

"We know you're a spy! Who sent you?" they hissed.

When she began to cry, they tired of her and allowed her to find her own way home.

Taxi ranks spring up all over Liverpool Eight, as people are growing too frightened to use the streets—another Belfast touch. I took advantage of this custom by hopping into a taxi and travelling round Prince's Park to nearby Lark Lane and leafy Hadassah Grove. Genteel bohemians and Liverpool "Hampstead thinkers" have transformed a neighbourhood of artisans' cottages and once-decayed Victorian mansions into a region of pure delight, an oasis with restaurants and book-shops. (Not to mention a police station.) Yellow leaves spiralled down from plane and chestnut trees, and children called out "Penny for the Guy!" Their guys were made of pillows with hats on.

Later, in Lodge Lane, I found another trace of Irish Liverpool—Maguire's Livery Stables.

ON MY LAST full day in Liverpool, I set out towards Everton to renew acquaintanceship with the Orange Lodge people. The Loyal Orange Lodge began, most historians agree, in County Armagh at the close of the 18th century. Today, Armagh is one of the disputed "Six Counties" that comprise Northern Ireland. In the beginning, the Orangemen formed their Lodge in order to badger the Anglican land-owning class into granting them tenancies and reducing farm rents. Fears of Catholic emancipation and

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the subsequent increase of Catholic tenant farmers changed the Orange Order into an anti-Papist organisation. Early Orangemen had much in common with the early Ku Klux Klan in America.

Nowadays, the prayers and pledges of the Orange Order have been refined into high-minded language. There were no Orange Lodges when William of Orange defeated James Stuart at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. "King Billyism" has been adopted retrospectively by Orangemen.

As far as I can see, Orange-ism acts partly as a form of Scottish Nationalism. Not only Ulster Protestants march in Ulster Orange Parades. Canadians and New Zealanders, clean-cut earnest young men, travel half the world over in order to be there with drums and tartans. A Scottish kilt-and-bagpipes theme runs through all such parades. Long-ago sojourns in Ulster toughened the Scottish Presbyterians and made them strong enough to be Indian-shooting frontiersmen, pioneers, and Liverpudlians.

Everton, the "Protestant quarter" of Liverpool, must have been far more interesting before the bulldozers and tower blocks came. Great slashes of modernity have given it a bleak atmosphere, but there are still quite a few terraced streets left. Householders I have spoken to usually wish to leave Liverpool. Terraced streets age well, if kept up, but concrete dwellings do not. Everton's modern buildings already looked decrepit. Youths had sprayed the initials "OVF" on walls and fences. The Orange Volunteer Force is a shadowy Liverpool version of the ineffectually-banned UVF, or Ulster Volunteer Force, a body which believes in "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" conflict with the IRA.

At the Orange Lodge, which resembles a modern working men's club outside and inside, I found the members in good spirits, practising their instruments for the forthcoming Remembrance Sunday parade. On that day, they march down to the city centre and lay a wreath at the Cenotaph. Liverpool's Great War memorial, not completed until the late 1920s, is a very fine one. A sculpted bronze mural (I can only call it) depicts both marching ranks of fighting men and grieving widows. On their march, the Orangemen play drums, flutes and piano-accordions, as well as brass, and carry colourful banners proclaiming "The Purple Sons of Derry". "It always rains on Remembrance Sunday", a youth grinned.

I had been nervous when I first entered the Lodge, in 1982. I had found, to my surprise, that its main function was that of a drinking club. There was a juke-box of Orange records, and a Cradle Roll of future Orangemen who had been put down for membership on their day of birth, just like Etonians.

Now that I have done a little Orange Lodge browsing, in Liverpool and Belfast, I realise that the Loyal Orange Lodge is a broad church, encompassing a wide spectrum of attitudes. At one point of the spectrum it merges with the UVF and the ailing National Front. At the other, it sweeps down to the dignified shores of both Freemasonry and born-again Christianity. Genial Everton probably balances somewhere in the middle.

Bidding the musicians farewell, I continued on my way towards the narrow terraced street where my friends the Grahams live. They belong to the same branch of Free Presbyterianism as Ian Paisley. In fact, their son went away to Bible College in Belfast, and had to deliver his test sermon (or "message") to the Reverend Doctor himself. The Grahams, and most of their Christian friends, are on friendly terms with the Loyal Orange Lodge, but are not members. For one thing, they believe it is sinful to drink alcohol.

Not all of Liverpool's Lodges are as friendly as Everton. I recall entering a tiny Lodge in dockland and chatting to the barman, a big stubble-haired broken-nosed man. The glittering highly-polished bar had been almost empty. Suddenly I noticed a mirror on the wall bearing a pattern of Bible, cross and crown, with the message "UVF Nursing Corps".

"Yes, we're very proud of that", the barman told me. "It's a gift from a Lodge in Belfast."

"But the UVF is a forbidden paramilitary organisation", I protested.

"So?"

"Oh, nothing", I muttered, gulping down my bitter lemon, sweeping the back of my hand across my mouth, and departing hastily.

I hadn't liked that "So?"

At the Grahams' house I sat in the over-decorated front parlour with a cup of tea, catching up on all the family news. Mr Graham would soon be retiring (he is the engineer of a Mersey dredger) and they would be leaving Everton for a bungalow in a Northern seaside town. His wife bustled about, the polite grown-up children made small-talk, and I felt for all the world as if I were visiting a kindly family in Wales.

Another visitor, a big good-humoured man from Northern Ireland, was going to "deliver the message" that night in the local nonconformist church. Like most of their preacher friends, he had links with Ian Paisley. We all set off together on foot, and soon I was sitting on a wooden chair in a dingy side hall. The church proper, a Gothic fantasia, was only used on Sundays. Most of the streets around it had been bulldozed.

After a certain amount of prayers and hymns, the speaker arose and asked us all to pray for him. Everyone in the crowded hall bowed their heads and muttered. "Blessed be His neem, amen", the speaker concluded, and then began his sermon.

He had, so he told us, been asked to speak at a church in a part of Belfast where he had never been before. When he arrived early, he found the church still locked and the Minister waiting on the steps for his wife to bring the key. Just then, a huge parade of "Republicans from the neighbouring Roman Catholic area" swung around the corner. Whether they were political demonstrators or part of a religious procession he did not tell us, probably because he did not distinguish between the two.

At this provocative sight, the Minister could not help but sing *The Sash My Father Wore*, the jaunty secular song of Orange triumph.

> "First he sang it softly, then louder and louder. My heart swelled with pride to hear the anthem. Without knowing how it happened, I found myself singing it too. The

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Republicans halted and stood staring at us. There we were, on the steps of God's house, singing *The Sash* at the top of our voices to a stunned hostile audience of 6,000 Republicans! We sang it right to the end—'So on the Twelfth I always wear the Sash me father wore!'

Then, in that silence, we heard a 'click' of the church door behind us . . . being unlocked. Just as the crowd gave a roar and sprang as one man towards us, we leaped into the church and locked ourselves in. After banging on the door for a while, they went away. I have never heard *The Sash* sound sweeter than on that day."

With that the Grahams' friend stepped down, in an atmosphere of warm enthusiasm.

Back in my hotel, I realised that the preacher had left God and Jesus Christ out of his sermon altogether. A vivid description of a narrowly-avoided cat and dog fight had done duty as a Christian sermon, and no one had noticed the difference. (Surely there had not *really* been 6,000 Roman Catholics there?)

In the morning, I dragged my red, white and blue bag down to Lime Street Station. There I said goodbye to an Irish city that fascinates me, and rode down to England in a train called "The London School of Economics".

O Pioneers! . . .

By David Stove

WE ARE INDEBTED to many pioneers who, by overcoming a certain obstacle once and for all, made later generations their beneficiaries. It is usually interesting, and often agreeable, to learn more about such exceptional people, especially if they have been, for some reason, almost forgotten. Two such pioneers are the subject of these notes: an American, Margaret Sanger (1883-1966), and an Englishwoman, Marie Stopes (1880-1958).

Both were once extremely famous, but nowadays it is quite rare to find anyone under 35 who has so much as vaguely heard of either. And, indeed, they had the misfortune to outlive their own fame by a matter of about twenty years. While these two brave and energetic women were still "full of fight", the cause that they were fighting for enjoyed such a sudden and complete victory that they were left, so to speak, on a deserted battlefield.

Mrs Stopes was the driving-force and leader of the contraception movement in Britain, as Mrs Sanger was in the USA. Although the latter was a frequent visitor to England, the two women hardly ever met. In fact, after a momentary initial alliance, they became the bitterest of enemies. But it is not my intention to write a biographical account of either: only to give some vignettes drawn from their lives. I have selected these not in any particular order, but simply for the light they cast on the character of the two forgotten benefactors.[1]

Margaret Sanger married twice, but her only children were two boys and a girl, by her first husband. The girl died at the age of four, and from that time onwards her mother devoted that day each year to private (though well-publicised) mourning. But neither before nor after her daughter's death was she other than a bad mother to her children. They hardly ever saw her. The boys were parked, early and for as long as possible, in residential schools and colleges: they evidently bored her. Anyway, she was nearly always away, at meetings, or on lecture-tours, or travelling overseas.

Once her sons became parents themselves, she sometimes found time to give grandmotherly advice to their children. Margaret was once asked by her sixteen-year-old granddaughter how much "petting" (and the like) was permissible or desirable. She replied:

> "Kissing, petting, and even intercourse are alright as long as they are sincere. I have never given a kiss in my life that wasn't sincere. As for intercourse, I'd say three times a day was about right. . . ."[2]

Is "three times a day" asking rather too much of the "sincerity" of even the most devoted husband, or of any one man? Apparently Margaret was of this opinion, for she hardly ever relied on her husband alone for all the intercourse she demanded. She almost always had at least one lover, and during one of her many trips to England she had three at the same time.

Could her advice to her granddaughter have been a joke? No: the number of jokes in Margaret Sanger was exactly the same as the number of jokes in the Bible. The same was true of Marie Stopes. And if either woman, *per impossibile*, ever had made a joke, it would not have been on the subject they both held sacred.

MARGARET SANGER, THEN, when she wrote on contraception, at least knew something about the matter. By contrast, Marie Stopes was always publishing books on subjects of which she had literally no experience. When she wrote *Married Love* in 1916, she was still a virgin, despite having been married for five years. (The marriage was finally annulled on the ground of her husband's impotence.) When she published *Contraception* in 1923, she had been trying unsuccess-

[1] Competent biographies of both women exist, and most of my information has been drawn from two of these. They are Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger* (New York, 1979), and Ruth Hall, *Marie Stopes* (London, 1977). Both women found an ally and friend in "the philosopher of love", Havelock Ellis, and a good deal of information about them, but especially about Margaret Sanger, can be found in Phyllis Grosskurth, *Havelock Ellis* (London, 1980). Mrs Sanger published two autobiographies—but both of them were "ghost-written", and they are nearly unreadable. Even the second and better one, *An Autobiography* (first published in 1938 but reissued in New York in 1970), is, on account of its pervasive untruthfulness, much less valuable than it ought to have been.

[2] Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, pp. 227-28.

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fully for years to conceive by her second husband. In 1928 she published *Enduring Passion*, a manual which teaches married couples how to keep the flame burning just about up to the actual onset of *rigor mortis*; but it was at this very time that she had terrorised her second husband into sexual incapability.

Still, did not Doctor Marie Stopes (as she always insisted on being called) have the second-hand experience of her patients to draw upon? Not at all; she had no patients, and was not a doctor of medicine. She merely got all the mileage she could out of the widespread belief that she was. Her doctorate was literally that: a Ph.D. in Palaeobotany which she had received from Munich University early in the century.

INEVITABLY, the Roman Catholic Church was the most energetic enemy of these two pioneers. In the early days of the contraception movement in New York, Margaret Sanger and her followers more than once felt the heavy hand of a police force which was predominantly Irish, and which regarded the Church's word as more than law.

Marie Stopes never had to contend against anything like that, but she became more and more convinced as time went on that the Catholic Church was conspiring against her everywhere. At one stage in London she owned a dangerous dog, and the municipal authorities (in response to the complaints of other ratepayers) demanded that she restrain or destroy it. She absolutely refused to do either, but hired a private detective to find out how many Catholics there were among the magistrates and aldermen who were persecuting her. Alas, they were all Protestants.

In 1923 Marie survived a particularly harrowing lawsuit, in which all the legal costs of the other side were guaranteed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The undergraduates of Oxford University, wild with enthusiasm for her cause, invited her to address them. Both the Town and the University refused her a platform, but the students found another location outside the jurisdiction of those authorities, and held the meeting they desired with their heroine. One fortunate undergraduate was chosen to present to her on stage a bunch of flowers: his name was Evelyn Waugh. . . .

Marie Stopes was sustained in her struggle by a conviction that she was the chosen instrument of a divine purpose. So, when the Anglican Bishops assembled for the Lambeth Conference in 1920, she sent them all a copy of her book, *A New Gospel*. She had written this specifically for the Bishops, and it begins:

> "My Lords, I speak to you in the name of God. You are His Priests. I am his Prophet. I speak to you of the mysteries of man and woman."[3]

She proceeded to explain to the Bishops how vital it was that vaginal and seminal fluids should be exchanged, etc., and enjoined them to "rise to meet the new revelation".

> "Thee shall lead the peoples of all the world to a higher potentiality for His service than has ever been known."

This use of the word "thee" must have been a particularly telling touch, because, as everyone knows, all the best biblical characters talk like that. She did not tell the Bishops, though she jotted it down elsewhere: "I will be canonised in 200 years." Another of her jottings was: "Utopia could be reached in my lifetime had I the power to issue inviolable edicts."[4]

When she was 43, Marie Stopes finally did have, by her second husband, her first and only child. It was a boy, and you can read about his upbringing, if you have a stout heart, in Ruth Hall's biography of his mother. Yet despite all the care that was lavished on him, he turned out—a twice-told tale!—badly in the end, for he insisted on marrying a woman who *sometimes wore spectacles*. This appalling crime against eugenics was more than Marie could forgive; she cut him out of her will, for good. Still, Harry Stopes-Roe seems finally to have succeeded in escaping from his mother's sphere of influence: not unscathed, for no one could do that, but comparatively unscathed. (This is one of the few cheerful things in the narrative of Marie Stopes's life.)

His father, Humphrey V. Roe, was not so fortunate. There had been a successful manufacturing business in his family, and it was redirected into aircraft-manufacture by his brother, A. V. Roe (the "Avro" of those Avro-Anson aeroplanes which were a household name in Britain as late as World War II). Humphrey, when he married Marie, was rich, a veteran of the Boer War, an aeroplane-pilot himself, and indeed everything that was "most eligible".

While their marriage was still intact, the couple bought as their principal residence a beautiful 18th-century house, with 40 acres of land, named Norbury Park. But Roe lost nearly all his money in the 1929 Depression, and even before that the publication of *Enduring Passion* in 1928 had signalled the non-endurance of his passion for Marie. So she winkled him out of their house and her life. She drafted a document (purporting to have been drafted by him) which stated that he released her, for the future, from any interference on his part with her sexual freedom. She bullied him into signing it, and into staying away henceforth from Norbury Park. He was reduced to living alone in a single room in London, where in due course he died. This saddened Marie, who wrote a little poem about it, deploring the housing shortage.

WHEN MARIE STOPES was 58 she believed, and let it be known, that she was going to live to the age of 200. When she was 70, and puzzled as to why young men seemed blind to her physical attractions, she believed that she would live to be 120 at least. In fact she died at the age of 78.[5]

Margaret Sanger was born into a Catholic family, and received an education up to early high school. But her real education, like her real religion, only began about 1910,

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[3] This quotation from *A New Gospel*, and all the others in this paragraph, are taken from Ruth Hall, *Marie Stopes*, pp. 160-61.

[4] Ruth Hall, *Marie Stopes*, in a page of quotations prefixed to the book, and p. 175.

[5] It has been well said of such people as Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, that while there's death there's hope; but perhaps the saying admits of other applications as well.

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when she was 30. For it was then that she was introduced by her husband, Bill Sanger, to the socialist, anarchist, and bohemian circles of New York.

Here Margaret quickly learnt a great deal more than poor Bill had ever meant to teach her. Much later in life she married a millionaire, and also made a lot of money herself as an importer of contraceptive devices. Well, it is "the American way", and Margaret became more than reconciled to capitalism. But in her formative years of 1910-15, contraception was by no means the exclusive obsession which it later became with her. On the contrary, it was then only one strand in the fabric of her revolutionary socialism. At that time and place, of course, no one bothered much about calling themselves "Revolutionary Socialists", as distinguished from "Anarchists", and it is possible that Margaret never called herself either. Still, a revolutionary socialist, tinged with anarchism, is what she certainly was.

It is nowadays often believed that such people, in those far-off innocent days before the Russian Revolution, did not really know what they were doing, or were only half in earnest. But this is believed merely from ignorance. In 1912, people like Margaret Sanger and her associates knew quite well what they were doing, and were quite as much in earnest, as revolutionary socialists in the next half-century of militance. They merely lacked the international backing, the organisation, and the weapons, which their counterparts now enjoy.

For example, one of Margaret's close associates at this formative stage of her life had served fourteen years in prison for the attempted assassination of the head of the Carnegie Steel Company. President McKinley had been fatally shot in 1901 by a man who had recently attended a lecture on assassination given by another of Margaret's close friends: a sequence of events of which this friend was often heard to boast. In 1914 Margaret published (though she did not write) an article called "In Defense of Assassination", and she threatened to follow it up with one of her own in defence of arson. She defended in print some anarchists who had been accidentally killed by their own bomb, home-made in a house on Lexington Avenue. And so on. . . .

I offer the following as a representative specimen of her political writing in 1911. The tastes of cannibals, she wrote, are more excusable than those of capitalists, though

> ". . . not so fastidious, so refined, so Christian, as those of our great American coal operators, those leering, bloody hyenas of the human race who smear themselves with the stinking money of Charity to attract the foul flies of religion who spread pollution throughout the land."[6]

Margaret was no Jack London when it came to writing. Still, her general ideas were the same as his, and they had resonant echoes. . . .

[6] Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, p. 69.

Old Sam

His tweed jacket
logs the day's work
with scent of rosemary
thyme bay

he knows about the mud
on his boots
but not the leaf
in his hair

indoors he'll pat the dog
and cosset the cat
but his garden
is more than a pet

whether bully
or Lady Bountiful
she always clings
close as a spouse

reaching him
even at night
in the dust to dust hug
of lavendered sheets

A. H. Snow

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What Is Art For?

Peter Fuller Reconsidered—By ANNA ADAMS

THIS ESSAY was written several months ago while Peter Fuller was still very much alive and no one could have guessed that his life was to be prematurely ended. One writes in a different tone about a living person, who is well able to stand up for himself if he objects, than one does about someone who, in death, has lost all right of reply; but what I have written here seemed to me to be true at the time. I would like to add that he is a great loss to the art world, which needed his sane judgments and his enthusiasm for painting and sculpture. Serious artists have lost a champion against philistinism.

In the field of art criticism, 1988 was the year of Peter Fuller. Not only did he launch the magazine *Modern Painters*, which is a kind of Hyde Park Corner for the discussion of contemporary art, but he had several of his earlier books reissued, as well as publishing *Theoria*, subtitled *Art and the Absence of Grace*.[1] Fuller both felt and roused strong passions. Art critics have so often been wrong, and made fools of themselves, in the past, that recently they have tolerated almost anything, so long as it seemed to be novel; and this has led to the elevation of much rubbish which Peter Fuller made it his business to shoot down in flames, if he could. Some said that he was a self-publicist as well as an iconoclast, for he often included himself in his tales of adventure among the arts, and the ideas that generate them and are generated by them: but there is nothing wrong with writing intellectual autobiography. Wordsworth set an illustrious example with *The Prelude*, though his adventures were found in wrestling with the angels of nature, not art; but the principle is the same; so Wordsworth and Peter Fuller both use the first person singular a great deal.

Fuller's second favourite word appears to be "polemic", and he was certainly contentious. The image in my mind after reading "Seeing through Berger" was of a stage whereon unruly choruses of art critics, historians and theorists, dressed in padded pantaloons and bright red or blue wigs, were dancing about shouting "I say, I say, I say", and belabouring each other with bladders of wind.

Why not look at works of art in silence, and let them speak? I wondered; but, having experienced art, we all have opinions and wish to express them. Peter Fuller was outspokenly at war with what Blake called "the Pretence of Art to destroy Art"—which is, alas, always with us. He tried to find some standard by which art could be judged, and to discover what it is that gives it value. So he wrote about Art and God, Art and Dialectical Materialism, Art and Psychoanalysis, trying to make various works pass through religious, political, and psychological sieves. It is inevitable that much of the time he was writing the history of art history, and whole pages can go by without a glimpse of a painted canvas on the horizon of the verbal sea. I do not complain of this. Parasitic it may be, but it is necessary, for though in theory great works of art can speak for themselves, they do in fact have to be analysed and argued over, though criticism can discourage and destroy as well as analyse and encourage.

"Who invented Art? and what is it for?" are not quite permissible questions, since Mankind is the art-making species, and we might find ourselves asking what Man is for, and be unable to answer. Art is diagnostic of humanity. This can be proved by a visit to the Museum of Mankind to look at the artefacts of humans who are as poor as it is possible to be, who live on the bare ground or among the trees, and own nothing but what they can carry, yet they practise this unnecessary activity of art. It is old-fashioned to repeat that God made man in his own image, but it would be another way of saying that man is a maker. We have evolved a diversity of arts for various purposes, and some that are gloriously non-functional. Dylan Thomas said that his poems were written in praise of God, and he would be a damn fool if they weren't. The sorts of illumination embodied in works of art are, in fact, important to people. But some of us do things better than others, and this is where critics step in with a great deal to say—assessing, appreciating, and condemning. But where art is justly valued, there man, nature, and (if it is insisted upon) God too are being honoured.

Marxist critics have announced that where paintings are valued it is money that is being honoured, but this is so only in the case of crippled minds. I remember once, a long time ago, taking my parents-in-law round the National Gallery. They were both Londoners, the National Collections were

[1] *Theoria: Art and the Absence of Grace*. By PETER FULLER. Chatto & Windus, £15.00.

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their property, and entrance to the Gallery was free, but they had never been there before because they felt intimidated by a few marble staircases and classical columns. My father-in-law had had an elementary schooling that taught him, fairly thoroughly, that ambition was unrealistic, and intellectual experiences were not for him. He could, however, draw quite well, had beautiful handwriting, and had won the Hendon and District Woodwork Prize at the age of fourteen. "Cor, boy", he said, looking at the Rembrandts, "think what they must be worth. You could pay off the national debt with this lot, I should think; they must be worth a packet."

My mother-in-law, for whom education had been water off a duck's back, reacted quite differently. She became emotionally involved with Rembrandt. "He looks such a nice man. He looks so kind, and sad. I do like him. But I don't like her", she said in front of Saskia; "stuck-up thing." Hendrickje Stoffels won her heart. "She's lovely; she looks really nice." This was the beginning of true art-appreciation, because a very little thought would have told her that the painting must be good, tender and perceptive (and almost superhumanly skilful) to convey so much of humanity. But, alas, they never went again; they couldn't quite brave the portico and swing-doors on their own.

WHAT WE SHOULD be valuing in art is talent, vision, and truthfulness; messages from On High need not come into it, though the unconscious cannot be kept out. Nor do messages from God have to be found in nature to make it worth painting, even though they may be there. Peter Fuller was brought up in a religious home. His parents seem to have been some sort of evangelical Christians; but he became an avowed atheist. If a human mind can be compared to sedimentary rock composed of deposits of various sorts of thought, then the bottom layer of Peter Fuller's mind was religious. Atheism, Marxism, Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysis, motley experiences of art, a proper education at Cambridge, wide reading, including the complete works of Ruskin fossilised like shells in limestone, were all there in thicker or thinner bedding-planes. Minds being even more liable to upheaval and quake than the earth's unstable crust, these layers become buckled, broken, and mixed. Deep faults may develop. But the sediment of religion laid down in childhood remains at the bottom of everything so that, unlike many of his contemporaries, Peter Fuller was able to use the word "God" without embarrassment, and he really expected a foundation of religious thought to be at the bottom of all serious art.

In one of the best chapters in *Theoria* he quotes Karl Barth: "We begin by stating that religion is unbelief. It is a concern, indeed, we must say it is *the* one great concern of godless man." I personally have always felt that Doubt is the one believable religion; I hope that Barth is meaning the same thing. Doubt makes firm ground for objectivity, while man-made religious structures do not. Fuller also quotes Barth as saying: "Man bolts and bars himself against revelation by producing a substitute, by taking away in advance the very thing which has to be given by God." If this is Christianity, then perhaps we are not atheists after all. One of the things for which we should feel grateful to Fuller is that he did a great deal of reading for us, and we can either accept *Theoria* as a labour-saving device, or be lured by it into the many volumes of Barth's *Dogmatics* or Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.

FULLER WAS ALSO very fond of quoting from Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach". He returned again and again to the sound of the long withdrawing roar of the sea of faith which exposed the naked shingles of the world in the late 19th century, when Turner was dead, Ruskin was mad, and Darwin had published *The Origin of Species*. I find it difficult to believe that doubt was such a new and transforming phenomenon as Peter Fuller made out. Since doubt was once a capital crime, it must always have been a fairly strong temptation. Shelley wrote *The Necessity for Atheism* quite early in the 19th century, and even Dorothy Wordsworth, looking at Aysgarth Falls in 1802, allowed herself to doubt that the landscape of Wensleydale came straight from the hands of God.

> "There was too much water in the river for the beauty of the falls, and even the banks were less interesting than in winter. Nature had entirely got the better in her struggles against the giants who first cast the mould of these works; for indeed it is a place that did not in winter remind one of God, but one could not help feeling that there had been the agency of some 'Mortal Instruments' which nature had been struggling against without making a perfect conquest. There was something so wild and new in this feeling, knowing as we did in the inner man that God alone had laid his hands upon it, that I could not help regretting the want of it."

Dorothy had found doubt and the freedom to speculate to be exhilarating pleasures: not so Ruskin. He agonised over the fallen state of Man separated from God, and Fuller's *Theoria* follows the progress of his thought through Ruskin's works. It follows sympathetically, for Fuller suffered a series of losses of faith himself, and it makes us realise, although he was something of a fallen Wordsworth and impotent Turner, the "prophetic realism of Ruskin's imagination".

Having a tendency to oversimplify, Ruskin wrote excellent aphorisms. "There is no wealth but life. . . . All ancient art was religious and all modern art is profane. . . . Modernism began and continues wherever civilisation began and continues to deny Christ. . . . External nature has a body and a soul like a man, but her soul is the Deity."

Peter Fuller gives us a précis of the debate about art, politics, nature and God that continued from Ruskin's day into the 20th century. Marx, of course, was hostile to Christian art, and he couldn't enthuse about nature either, since, for him, nature was something to be tamed into productivity for a humanity that was going to share the fruits of the earth fairly. Watts saw God as a great void, so he turned to more comprehensible, mythological abstractions. William Morris, as writer and artist, worked in the belief that Eden might be recovered by means of handcrafts, socialism, and

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garden cities. Whistler claimed to be an aesthete, believing that it was the business of art to be beautiful and not necessarily meaningful. He disapproved of people looking through pictures rather than at them; while Ruskin, seeking messages from God in nature and art, espoused Theoria. But this was an uncomfortable marriage.

In the 1860s Ruskin doubted the Bible and felt disillusioned in both nature and science. In 1870 his mother died, and he fell prey to an increasing sense of the failure of nature. He could see nothing but cruelty and ghastliness where once he had seen Divinity, and he even felt that the weather was degenerating. This may have been objectively true, or it may have been a subjective result of the increasing mental illness which eventually caused him to retire from the theoretical fray while others continued the forever unfinished debate.

WALTER PATER BELIEVED (unfairly) that the wisest children of the world spend their days in art and song: he saw the origins of art in "imaginative reason" which thinks in images, or symbols. Most major artists since Ruskin's day—from Kokoschka to Bomberg—have had something to say about the spiritual in art, the spirit in the mass, or meaning versus pure beauty. No one, not even Monet, has been simply an eye and a hand. Peter Fuller dismisses Impressionism as vulgar, concerned only with visual experience and fleeting appearances, but perhaps the miraculous human eye, as a symbol for consciousness itself, may be the god that Impressionism glorifies.

I find it surprising that in a book devoted to ideas about the sacred and the profane, or the presence or absence of grace in art, neither Fuller nor Ruskin—nor anyone else—mentions light. Yet the light—which gives us days and years, and upon which organic nature depends because it feeds vegetation by photosynthesis, and which is essential to human well-being, and creates the illusion of colour, including the rainbow, and without which the visible world would be invisible, even if it existed—makes a wonderful symbol, or image, of God. So the Impressionists, who were besotted by light, may have been religious painters after all; and Turner was religious in that he understood, not the geology and botany with which Ruskin credited him, but light. He hollowed out an imaginary space behind the picture-plane, and he filled it with light. By means of this light we see trees, castles, distant prospects; often half-hidden in radiance.

When Ruskin drew he recorded, painstakingly and reverently, things as they were. He discovered interesting laws and correspondences, but he never clothed his heaps of geology in light and shadow. He never conveyed distance by suggesting the faint opacity of air, or half hid his subject in the deepening monochrome of dusk, or painted "pictures of nothing, and very like".

Turner was quite aware of the ambiguities of imagery, and that light might mean a great deal more than simple photons falling out of the sky. Did he not paint an angel standing in the sun? But he did not write about such matters a great deal, or very lucidly.

I cannot understand why art is not seen more often from the painter's point of view. A child discovers that he has a talent. In looking at whatever pictures come his way he can understand, without being told, how certain things are done. He makes copies, variations, and images of his own experience; his art teachers, and sometimes his friends, applaud him. Drawing engrosses him; painting entrances him; ideas possess him. He discovers expressive shapes: that an isosceles triangle, standing on its base, expresses stability, and a triangle standing on its apex expresses instability; while vertical lines pinning down a horizontal express stillness, and diagonals express movement. And so on. He plays with perspective, and embarks on exploration of the space behind the picture-plane, a space that he himself creates and fills with forms, just as the non-existent space inside his head is filled with dreams, visions, notions, patterns and possibilities.

Then suddenly the art historian, theorist or critic appears on the scene. "Perspective is old hat", he may say, or "No one should make oil-paintings any more because they are art-objects which become status symbols for the bourgeoisie. They are used by an élite to impress lesser mortals. It is one of the contradictions inherent in capitalism that a picture

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with socialist content—by Courbet, Millet or Daumier—can be one of the props of the privileged classes."

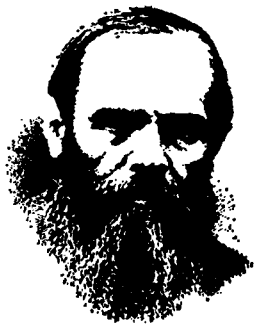
So what does the poor young artist do? Can he divert his talent into the designing of lavatory-pans and lino? Should he go into television, hairdressing, or interior decorating? Talent tends to be non-transferable: witness the drawings of the verbally gifted Peter Fuller, reproduced in *Art and Psychoanalysis*, or the drawing of jugs by Marion Milner, from her book called *On Not Being Able to Paint*. (Thank heaven there cannot be a book called *On Not Being Able To Write*.) So the painter has to become a lonely, poor and—for the time being—anachronistic figure, persisting in making oil-paintings that the wicked bourgeoisie doesn't buy and the fashionable critics don't write about. He may not even want to make animated cartoons or go into advertising. He wants to paint serious, thoughtful, inspired pictures that take the next unpredictable step in the improvised dance of tradition. Yet Marxist critics announce that oil-painting ought to die because capitalism ought to be dead.

Everything is corruptible. It would be possible to argue that there should be no more women because very beautiful examples are sometimes paraded about by impotent rich men who hope to enhance their own image. But it is not impossible that a woman might retain her virtue in such a position, just as a good picture retains its virtue while hanging on the walls of an armaments manufacturer's room. Women, of course, are not property, but neither are works of art. They belong to their makers, and to humanity at large, and their "owners" are really custodians. Eventually, pictures in private collections should find their way into public collections, and once there, hanging on the walls of the Tate, the Orangerie, or the Belvedere in Vienna, they may infect some innocent young person with the desire to do likewise, or to go one better, and set out on a career of drawing and painting, or sculpture. "No, No, No", cry the pundits. "Click, click", go the cameras. "There is no need for this laborious sifting of images through the human mind. The film is the medium of the age." And so on.

The young artist must be very strong, and survive the storms of verbiage that come at him from all sides. Dealers who may want to typecast him, and sycophants who want to make him complacent, are as bad as enemies. Honest (even unkind) critics are better; and Peter Fuller was always on the side of the artist: he could see the necessity for art, which is in the nature of humanity. The biological and emotional bases of life do not change, so that art, which is founded in the fundamental experiences and mysteries of life, does not have to be repeatedly abolished and reorganised. Nor can it be made by machines. It is made by gifted people who dedicate their lives to it, and when we value the canvases of Egon Schiele, for instance, or Gauguin, we are honouring humanity, which in these instances managed to give according to its capacity, though it may not have received according to its needs.

The Perspectives of Space

Dostoevsky's Monasteries—By ROBERT SHANNAN PECKHAM



DOSTOEVSKY'S FRIENDSHIP and subsequent enmity towards Turgenev have been much discussed. As Geir Kjetsaa remarks in his new biography of Dostoevsky,[1] this is perhaps the most serious literary feud in Russian history. Provoked partly by a bitterness at the disparity of their financial circumstances in a period when Dostoevsky found himself heavily in debt, by temperamental differences, and by antithetical political convictions (especially after the publication of Turgenev's novel *Smoke* in 1867), Dostoevsky's resentment found expression in the satirical representation of Turgenev in his novel *The Devils* (1872). An alternative view, however, suggests that behind Dostoevsky's personal dispute and in his portrayal of Karmazinov, the effete and hypocritical idealist forever delivering his "reminiscences", lies an aesthetic quarrel.

Commenting on Karmazinov's "speech" at the Governor's ball, the narrator of *The Devils* observes of the novelist's landscape: "There were always some gorse-bushes about (it had to be gorse or some other plant which has to be looked up in a botanical dictionary)." More than an ironic interjection, Dostoevsky's criticism can be seen as a comment on what he perceived as Turgenev's uncontrolled lyricism and his tendency to include extraneous "details" that obscured or even substituted for the contents. What Dostoevsky sought above all in his fiction was an authenticity or veracity of "detail"—an observation that recalls his remark to Turgenev, during their notorious meeting in Baden-Baden, that Turgenev should acquire a telescope and direct it towards Russia in order to see what was happening there.

"Besides", Jacques Catteau declares, "Dostoevsky was not a man for details." But this is a comment that Catteau's important study *Dostoyevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*,[2] recently translated from the French, contradicts as it traces configurations of thematic and stylistic details from

[1] *Dostoyevsky*. By GEIR KJETSAA. Papermac, £8.99.

[2] *Dostoyevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*. By JACQUES CATTEAU. Translated by AUDREY LITTLEWOOD. Cambridge University Press, £45.00.

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money to illness, space and colour. Indeed, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) might be described as a fiction that hinges completely on the idea of the detail, the word itself connoting the complete fusion in Dostoevsky's art of technique and idea. "The smallest detail of this affair", the narrator remarks in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "is still vividly remembered in our town and all over our district." Similarly, as he recalls the fatal night in the garden, looking through the window at his father, Dimitry notes that "he grasped everything to the smallest detail, seizing on every point".

The word recurs with such frequency that it becomes one of the text's structural dimensions. In Dimitry's interviews with the examining magistrate and public prosecutor and in the account of the legal procedures, "details"—such as the question of whether the garden door was open or closed and the existence of the 3,000 roubles—are crucial. "Details" in Dostoevsky's fiction are never relegated to background; they can reprieve or condemn a man. From a slightly different perspective this tension becomes one of background and foreground, which are often antagonistic in his novels.

AT THE BEGINNING of *The Devils* Dostoevsky draws an analogy with *Gulliver's Travels*. Adapting Swift's narrative to his purpose, he introduces the notions of relative perspectives; of expanding and contracting size. The *Gulliver* metaphor is employed to describe Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky and his preoccupation with habit. Much later in the plot, Dostoevsky forces the reader's attention back to his initial comparison. In the portrayal of Shatov's murder ("A Very Busy Night"), where visibility is reduced to outlines, the author employs a cinematic sweep, combing the landscape first horizontally and then vertically. Almost incidentally, he observes that "the wind stirred the tops of the pine-trees"—a phrase that prompts the reader to retrieve the initial metaphor of height. In compelling the reader to make visual contrasts and compare relative statures, Dostoevsky emphasises the relative perspective of those involved in the crime. Visual orientation is matched by orientation *vis-à-vis* the text as the reader turns back to the opening pages. Dostoevsky's use of space illustrates Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival as a structural and stylistic technique which establishes the compatibility of relative values.[3]

The tallness of the trees underlines the pettiness of the crime about to be committed; the wind in the tree-tops accentuates the sterility that exists below. Indeed, in the opaque landscape the murderers are literally and figuratively "underground", sharing the same conspiratorial space as the protagonist of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864). Moreover, the murdered man, thrown into a lake, will be bound with weights, fixing him in antithesis to the swaying trees. The passage reveals an acute attention to spatial geometry as the antagonists knock the victim down and pin him to the ground. Significantly, the narrator declares that "everything to the last detail is known of this dreadful affair", demonstrating that space in Dostoevsky is often apprehended as "detail". (The elaborate spatial notations that run throughout his fiction reflect both his interest in drama and his preoccupation with the plastic arts, notably architecture, which he studied at the Military Engineering School at St Petersburg.)

THE HEIGHT OF the pine-trees and their verticality reverberate through *The Devils*. They provide one context for reading all the risings and sittings which pervade the text; as in the narrator's remark about Verkhovensky, that "he got very quickly tired of standing and very often preferred to lie down", or the portrayal of Kirilov lying flat on the floor, with his hands outstretched, as he searches for a ball under the cupboard. Yet, for all their evil, Dostoevsky intimates in his picture of Shatov's murder that the killers themselves are vertical and thus partake of a common nature with the trees. In effect, verticality is what defines them as men, an observation which Sir Thomas Browne noted in an essay on "The Erectness of Man", in which he points to the etymology of man in Greek (*anthropos*) and its possible derivation from the word for upwards (*ano*). As Primo Levi observed in his *Other People's Trades*,[4] ". . . for the ancients, man's verticality was the sign of his almost divine nature", as opposed to the snake who adhered to the earth.

In turn, this may relate to Dostoevsky's sensation of being spiritually crushed in rooms with low ceilings, a fact that Jacques Catteau lists as one of the author's obsessions—an obsession that may have its origins in the novelist's incarceration in Siberia which he described to his brother as being "shut up in a coffin". Indeed, the preoccupation with cramped space is reflected in the restrictive architecture of his fiction; from the shabby "corners" inhabited by the protagonists of his early works like *Poor Folk* (1846) to *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and the great murder novels. Thus, in Dostoevsky's novels the reader finds, in Catteau's words, "perception is often the structuring of space", or as he says elsewhere: "We realize the importance of space in Dostoevsky: it signifies."

Such "details" indicate one of the ways in which Dostoevsky conceives his fiction. In *The Devils* the organisation and deployment of space is vital, relating to the structure of

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[3] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (trans. Emmerson, Manchester University Press, 1985).
[4] *Other People's Trades*. By PRIMO LEVI. Michael Joseph, £12.95.

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the book itself and the manner in which the text generates its meanings. More generally, the latent political nature of Swift's fiction is also appreciated by Dostoevsky. In his descriptions of the hierarchical aspect of provincial society and the attempt by others to bring it down, he suggests another version of the vertical/horizontal dialectic. Gulliver's body becomes for Dostoevsky a "body *politique*" whose size varies like the imaginary and real proportions of Peter Verkhovensky's terrorist organisation.

Jacques Catteau's study explores some of these areas in a book that owes much to psychoanalytical texts like Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'Espace*,[5] and more specifically to the theoretical framework of Bakhtin's criticism, especially those sections concerned with space and its relationship to chronology. From an analysis of the compressed space in *Crime and Punishment* and the coffin-like rooms of Raskolnikov, Sonya and Svidrigaylov, which he compares to the exploded perspectives of German Expressionism, Catteau concentrates on lighting and setting. He observes that in his notes for the novels Dostoevsky pays most attention to time, regard for space entering at a later stage. As Catteau convincingly demonstrates, for Dostoevsky "space is born of duration"—a relationship noted by Edgar Allan Poe in his essay on "Time and Space" (Poe was an author whom Dostoevsky introduced to the Russian public in a series of published essays). Dostoevsky's drafts and notebooks with their frequent boxings and architectural doodlings attest to the crucial contingency between space and expression in his work.

In his concept of the "crossroads" and "preliminary" space, Catteau expands on Bakhtin's interest in the dialectic of threshold (*porog*) and market square (*ploshchod*). He analyses those moments of hesitation that, throughout Dostoevsky's fiction, occur on staircases (a strategy adopted from Hoffmann's fiction and the Gothic novel), on the thresholds of houses, bedrooms or drawing rooms, in corridors, doorways, porches or spaces enclosed in the light of a candle or light from a street lamp. Such moments, Catteau argues, tend to prefigure transgression and confession, as in Rogozhin and Myshkin's conversation on the staircase in *The Idiot* (1868) or Golyadkin's hesitation to enter the ballroom in *The Double* (1846): an entrance which represents a moral and social line of demarcation.

As Catteau notes, "the preliminary space, so ironically treated, opens on the tragic door of madness and shadow". Spatial hesitation, for Catteau, is a reflection of temporal hesitation between the present and beyond, the spatial threshold corresponding to stylistic images within the sentence, to expressions such as "suddenly", "that very moment", "immediately". At the same time the image of the threshold acquires a larger political significance in the European *versus* pan-Slavic debate of the late 19th century. If such a debate intimates the deep social and historical ambiguity of Russia's identity, paradoxically, like Dostoevsky's protagonists who hover between interior and exterior, Russia reveals herself precisely in that ambiguity—in a situation that corresponds to the threshold point.

For Catteau, the movement in Dostoevsky's novels is an outward confessional movement into the communal space, as in *Crime and Punishment*, or the yearning for endless space expressed by Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov* when the narrator observes that "his soul thirsted for freedom, space, vastness". George Steiner's comparison between the mythological components of American and Russian frontier literature is illuminating in this context, especially the importance of space.[6] One example is Stepan Verkhovensky's "last pilgrimage" at the end of *The Devils*. The movement away from the town into the countryside or into what Verkhovensky describes on his deathbed as "the infinite and the immeasurable", if it represents a liberation is also qualified: it is on this journey that Verkhovensky contracts his illness and dies.

The truth is that in Dostoevsky's fiction verticality—expressed by Verkhovensky's journey through the flat landscape—is always qualified by a horizontal plane: at the end he lies dying in bed. This explains, for example, the predominance of cripples in Dostoevsky's fiction—characters like Lisa Lebyatkin in *The Devils*—physical equivalents of a spiritual ambiguity that suspends his protagonists between the vertical and the horizontal. Like Kirilov's bouncing ball in *The Devils*, Dostoevsky's protagonists move upwards off the ground, offering moments of resistance, only to touch earth again. The architecture of Dostoevsky's plots centres precisely on such points of resistance and touch-down.

SPACE, HOWEVER, is only one aspect of Jacques Catteau's massive study, which seeks to analyse Dostoevsky's "process of literary creation". It is a work of "bricolage" that draws on multiple disciplines, from music to psychology, architecture and painting. From an analysis of Dostoevsky's social and intellectual milieu, or "creative environment", to specific aspects of his fiction like colour, and detailed critical commentaries on such texts as *A Raw Youth* (1875) and *The Idiot*, Catteau's work is one of the most comprehensive studies of Dostoevsky's art. To use Bakhtin's image of refracted light that is both distorted and dispersed as it crosses different media, Catteau follows the elusive lines of creation through the author's life, his private and public environments, to his drafts and notebooks, and finally into his works—observing the reader's response as part of that process.

Bakhtin provides a persuasive argument against those critics who perceive ideological inconsistencies in Dostoevsky's texts and a tendency to proselytise. At the same time, always alert to detail, he engages the deeper structures of the novels and counters critics like Isaiah Berlin who would take Dostoevsky to represent definable philosophical and political positions.[7] Similarly, Catteau avoids any extreme critical perspective, although he acknowledges his debt to critics such as Bakhtin and Grossman. Like Kjetsaa, Catteau reassesses traditional and often mythological perceptions of Dostoevsky's art and life, episodes such as the death of

[5] Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'Espace* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1957).

[6] George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (Faber, 1960).

[7] Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (1978).

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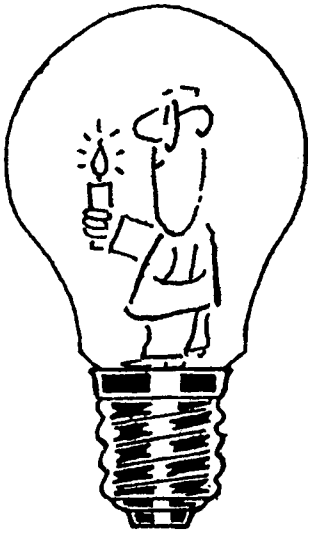
Dr Dostoevsky, and Freud's interpretation of the novelist's epilepsy. The scope of Catteau's book is vast and he has succeeded in fusing disparate critical tendencies into something that is completely original, creating in the process a type of "polyphonic" criticism.

If Zossima's monastery dominates the beginning of *The Brothers Karamazov* both in terms of setting and thematically, the idea of the monastery remains a potent model of organisation throughout the book. Indeed, the whole layout of the town with its fences, yards and gardens is reminiscent of the monastery. In this context, the centrifugal and centripetal movements are expressed as a series of invasions and break-outs that develop the original ambiguity of Alyosha's position both as a novice and as a member of the Karamazov clan. This tension is underlined by the controversial evidence of Karamazov's door; of whether it was closed or open at the time of the murder.

The monastery represents the formal deployment of space and the fusion of private and public environments. At the same time it consists in effect of an arrangement of thresholds where activity is determined by time—thresholds governed by temporality, as the doors of the monastery are secured for the night, nearly locking Alyosha out. Here, then, Dostoevsky through the spatial image of the monastery provides a metaphor for the "cells" which not only the terrorists of *The Devils* inhabit, but all his protagonists. Similarly, Catteau construes the novel as a genre of threshold or "preliminary" space that affords the reader access into the arrangement of "details" that constitutes Dostoevsky's own monastery.

Sects & the Sacred

Religion in the US—By EDWARD NORMAN



SCEPTICS OF religious truth always delight in the non-religious reasons for which people adopt religious ideas. It leaves Christianity with so little room to manoeuvre. The teachers of the Church have always insisted that Christianity is an historical religion: it is a reformed version of Judaism, at whose very centre lies a series of historical affirmations about the worldly relationship between God and his people. It is about a real creation, which operates as God has made it, so that its material basis necessarily determines the context within which men exist and so provides the content of their perceptions of the creator itself.

Thus God is disclosed through nature, and may be discerned, as in the pagan world, by the use of reason and observation. In order to confirm that the vocabulary of religion, derived in this manner, was on the right lines—and, more importantly, in order to bring men the gift of release from their sins—God intervened directly in the works of his hands. "Revelation" therefore imparted a precise understanding of the divine operation which men have often ruined by making too precise in relation to the mysterious purposes of Providence.

Sceptics of religion notice the nuts-and-bolts of all this. They see how the expectations of the culture in which men are placed prompt them to design religious phenomena that fulfil them. But they also suppose that the only authentic operations of God are the ones which suggest magical powers. They explain the God known through his creation in terms of independent material causes, and then deride the absence of a God evident through magical actions.

Nearly half of Malise Ruthven's *The Divine Supermarket*[1] is taken up with an account—accurate enough as historical narrative—of the origin and present condition of the Mormon Church. It illustrates the point. The sociology of religion directs us to consider the non-religious elements in the original vision of Joseph Smith in the heightened atmosphere of the "Burned-over" district of Upper New York State in the middle decades of the 19th century. And they are plain to see. While acknowledging that Smith was a genius at religion, Ruthven seeks out disproofs of any mysterious or transcendent dimensions in his scheme of things by the simple method of showing that the magical elements were false magic.

In the case of Mormonism, it is true, the relationship between Smith's untutored knowledge of historical religion and his sense of the numinous was rather close and rather too precisely matched to fantasy and the imaginative use of the cultural materials to hand. But Ruthven goes on to point to a general conclusion: that *all* religion originated in a comparable way, and that the historical religions are only taken seriously because the real nature of their origins has passed away and so may not now be cited. "What of the origins of Christianity, Islam and other world religions?" he asks. "None would stand up to inspection if we knew what really went into their making." Accounts of religious systems are written by those sympathetic to their founders. Independent accounts are usually not available. "It is the Mormons' mis-

[1] *The Divine Supermarket: Travels in Search of the Soul of America*. By MALISE RUTHVEN. Chatto & Windus, £14.95.

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fortune that we know a lot more about the origins of their religion than we can ever know about the origins of older religions."

How far is that really the case? In the literal sense of surviving documentary evidence it certainly is, but the people who witnessed the birth of Christianity and Islam were not strangers to religious trickery, false miracles, contrived spiritual experiences, and all the rest of it. Christianity occurred at a time and in a place which was full of religious entrepreneurs, each with his claims to wonderful works and to special channels of communication with the divine. Are we to suppose that the followers of Jesus were simple, naive people, easily mistaking contrived miraculous events for authentic manifestations of the divine presence?

The fact is that Jesus established his religious following in a glare of publicity: with a series of mass-meetings on the lakeside of Galilee and in the desert. His message and his claims were set within an accepted tradition of Judaic religiosity. At the time, as became clear with the examination of Jesus's teaching by the Temple authorities just before his death, everything he did was subject to very close scrutiny by people who were not backward in seeking out religious charlatanism or fraud. That Jesus was taken so seriously—warranting death, in fact—is our indication that his claims were not easily dismissed by ordinary resort to ridicule or disproof of the miraculous.

Ruthven has brushed the thought of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, and correctly recognises that sectarian religious phenomena are related to the incidence of social dislocation or the marginalisation of social groups. He sees, however, no essential difference between the luxuriant sectarianism of the American frontier and the origins of what he calls "the Jesus cult" in the Palestine of the first century. When religious phenomena are rationalised to this extent it is difficult to argue.

The non-religious reasons for which people adopt religious ideas are an important indication of the real nature of the creation: the world of our senses, in the religious scheme of things, is not somehow antipathetic to the Creator because its mechanics are exposed; and to see the material conditioning of human culture, religious or secular, is not to disprove the reality of the religious dimensions they convey to the senses. In the Christian view of the world the totality of things is within the sovereignty of God, and to analyse and categorise the materiality of experience is only a way of seeing God. The error is to suppose that material reality is somehow not divine, and that God can only be shown to exist if he works instead through magic.

The second difficulty with Ruthven's approach derives from his conviction that American religious conditions have shown unique features which have determined the course of religious history in the area. This is not even true of sectarian religion—which most of his book is taken up with. The sects have flowered in America, on the shifting frontier of the western advance across the continent, and in the urban accumulations with their social disorientation. Thus Weber and Troeltsch. But most American religion has *not* been sectarian. The history of Christianity and Judaism in America is overwhelmingly the history of the successful planting and adopting of the mainstream, historic churches of European origin.

Sectarianism is a steady-state in religious history. Sometimes the ascetic element in its composition has been retained within the conventional churches, but institutionalised—like aspects of the monastic ideal. Sometimes it has broken free, as in "the churches of the dispossessed" (much debated within the sociology of religion), when the poor and the marginalised seek a compensation for their earthly condition by resort to spiritual exclusivity.

These impulses can be found abundantly in the urban disorientation of 19th-century cities throughout Europe, and in the frontier cultures of Southern Africa; in the 20th century they thrive wherever there is social change in a context where religious expression is simultaneously present. Nothing in the American experience of religious sectarianism is peculiar to America, though obviously individual examples are soaked in local cultural forms. Probably even in scale America has produced no greater quantity of sectarianism than has been present elsewhere. The three great American religious inventions—Mormonism, Spiritualism, and Seventh Day Adventism—are denominations, not sects. Ruthven concentrates on the sects when he has finished with the Mormons; and, diverting as many of his observations about them are, the general picture of American religion gets distorted in the process. The history of religion in America is the history of denominationalism.

THE FUNDAMENTAL DIVISIONS in American religious history were all directly imported from Europe. Most American churches were simply regional variations of churches of different national origins. In almost every case, the differences between American experience of religion and the experience of Europe has not been due to the nature of religious ideas or institutions but to the nature of other historical, cultural, and national conditions.

Thus Ruthven asks the very interesting question: "Why, despite the common language and a common Protestant legacy, were the American and British religious cultures so different?" (The question is posed in terms of the much greater church attendance and support figures for the United States, and of the greater respect Christianity achieves in American society.) Is it due to the separation of Church and State, or to other evidence of religious freedom? Many have thought so. But the phenomenon has attracted much scholarly attention and no completely convincing explanations.

Probably Will Herberg was right: that what in America is called "religion" is largely devoid of religious content, and the churches are institutions of social integration, heavily committed to very worldly notions of community action. He noticed, too, the seeming paradox that religious people in the United States professed eternal creeds while at the same time living out a life-style plainly material and very much at variance with their stated beliefs.[2] This, too, is a hallmark of denominationalism: the churches have accommodated to the world, and their acceptance of social diversity finds an easy

[2] Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955).

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embodiment in their own vision of their relationship to the general life of society.

Religious freedom and the separation of Church and State, the central determining consideration of the context in which the American churches have existed, did not of themselves produce more churches or sects—they remoulded divided bodies which already existed, drawn across the Atlantic and adapted to local circumstance, but still the same as when first fashioned. Religious pluralism grew in 18th-century England and Europe, just as it did in the thirteen American colonies. The triumph of "the Voluntary system"—ecclesiastical financing independent of the State—was as marked a feature of England or Ireland in the 19th century as it was of America. Even the State Church of England, a parliament church if ever there was one, raised most of the cash for its enormous 19th-century expansion, at home and overseas, by voluntary means.

As soon as the lush excesses of the small sects are taken away from the centre of the picture, religious developments in America and Europe, and especially in Britain, begin to disclose many common features. The history of the mainstream denominations was very comparable in both societies. What of the picture today?

THERE IS AN inventiveness in public life in the United States which is lacking in Britain: what marks off the contemporary differences in the churches is a matter of enterprise exploitation of popular culture rather than a deeply laid historical sequence. There are plenty of "store-front" sects in the immigrant areas of modern England, and the vibrancy of Black Christianity—the only growth area in British Christianity—has many parallels with American experience. Almost all of the phenomena of sectarian religion regarded by Ruthven, and by much of conventional commentary, as characteristically American, is also evident in the rich Black Christianity of South Africa. There, it is true, there were connections with American religion at the turn of the century, through the agency of men like John Dowie,[3] but the style and manner of South African sectarianism today is almost entirely a response to conditions in that country. They are classic "churches of the dispossessed".

Ruthven largely ignores the reality of American religion, which is the overwhelming success of denominationalism. The mainstream churches—Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian—have adapted variously and well to American conditions, yet are still essentially the same churches as their parent bodies of the Old World. In America the major difference has been success itself: the most extensive expansion of the Church in history; the most widespread penetration of culture by religious ideals and institutions; the most educated Christian ministry, at least in numerical terms, that ever existed; the greatest capital investment in ecclesiastical institutions.

The problems with American religion, as Herberg noticed, derive from the syphoning-off of some of the spiritual content as a result of all the activism. Ruthven is drawn to the bizarre and the esoteric, to the glitz and packaging, and to the scale and breath-taking vulgarity. But they are nothing. Americans are themselves fascinated and appalled by these symptoms of vitality; yet the major part of the religious scene, the life of ordinary denominations, passes unremarked because so familiar.

It was a good idea to produce a series of cameo histories of American religion and then to illustrate them with the findings of a contemporaneous travelogue. The style encourages rather an episodic treatment, but that is probably unavoidable in so varied a landscape. Ruthven is a professional writer of some distinction—not a scholar. He has, however, done his research accurately and well; and, despite the criticisms of the grand design which I have suggested, his treatment of each individual aspect of his survey is internally balanced.

There are judicious moments: his lightness of touch in passing the hidden sexual excesses of Martin Luther King (though the same lightness is not in evidence when he comes to the much-publicised fallen angels of "the Electronic Church"), or his observation that "jeans, beard, open shirt and sneakers" are "*de rigueur* among the Jesuits" he met. His scrutiny of people is sharp but not unkind, and his eye for the bogus is acute. But Ruthven is no Graham Greene, and the interpretative asides of his travel notes never achieve insights of really lasting value. His relativism leads to the commonplace—as when he seeks to dismiss the stories associated with the foundation of Mormonism:

> "To the non-believer the story of the Golden Plates is frankly preposterous, though no less credible than the Virgin Birth and other Biblical Miracles."

Does he really think that?

[3] John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), founder in 1896 of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church at Zion City near Chicago, believed himself to be the first apostle of Christ.

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Books Encountered

Reported Sightings: Art Chronicles 1957-1987. By JOHN ASHBERY. Carcanet, £25.00.

"Closet yourself at home, painting the pots and pans you know from daily experience, and the world will come knocking at your door." Typically uncliquish aside on Jean Baptiste Chardin, from a similar loner writing casual, honest reports for newspapers and magazines, and hitting countless nails on the head. A splendid collection.

An Artificial Wilderness: Essays on Twentieth-Century Literature. By SVEN BIRKERTS. William Morrow, $20.95.

Engaging essays on (mainly) modernists and (in part) Europeans, by a self-confessed bibliomaniac and autodidact. Reprinted from magazines, they tend to be wordy, but are helpfully explanatory (bibliographies are appended) and suffer only from breathlessness. Excellent on Brodsky, Lowry, and "docufiction", *inter alia*.

Possession: A Romance. By A. S. BYATT. Chatto & Windus, £13.95.

Imagine a snowstorm paperweight, or a Victorian children's book with panoramic figures that stand up, or an early motion-picture machine: turn it into a film or a play via computer graphics. This is the strategy of a brilliantly skilful, tricky, rich, mysterious, elegiac, and literary novel, to savour, not skip.

The William Companion. By MARY CADOGAN. Macmillan, £14.95.

Slightly jocular but highly informative concordance-and-guide, largely alphabetical, to the late Richmal Crompton's "William" books, as fruitfully fossilised as Agatha Christie. Contains many Thomas Henry drawings, and omits only the best William jape—erasing the "O" on the sign of "Theobald Hairdresser".

William Gerhardie: A Biography. By DIDO DAVIES. Oxford University Press, £25.00.

A William equally impish, but less unchangingly aged: the much-fêted author of *Futility* (1922), *The Polyglots* (1925), etc., whose exotic dandyish (pre-Waugh) fiction finally petered out into sad but madly comic eccentricity. Ms Davies, whose dust-jacket portrait is very 1920s, copes brilliantly.

Revision and Authority in Wordsworth: The Interpretation of a Career. By WILLIAM H. GALPERIN. University of Pennsylvania Press, £31.30.

Closely-argued rereading, with much reference to current critical theorists, of the later, supposedly "conservative" Wordsworth, maintaining that it represents a revision of the earlier poetry which anticipates today's rethinking of romanticism. We-ell: a sadder and a wiser man, maybe—but surely more lacklustre.

William Wordsworth: A Life. By STEPHEN GILL. Oxford University Press, £8.95.

No, argues Stephen Gill in this bargain paperback of his master work, *lustre* was precisely what the late Wordsworth enjoyed as a "power in national culture". By then, though, Gill thinks, he had "stopped being an important poet". This fine "works and times" biography includes post-Moorman scholarship and is harder-headed—but Moorman's two volumes still charm.

The Quaker Tapestry. By ORMEROD GREENWOOD. Impact Books, £14.95.

The tapestry itself, inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry, is a series of 75 small crewel embroidered panels illustrating the Society of Friends. The book is a commentary on them, here reproduced in colour, to give a sympathetic but not sycophantic account of the Society's origins, development, and work. Admirable on all counts.

In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines. By STANLEY KARNOW. Century, £18.95.

Alert, factual, exhaustive 475-page history told in the best *haut journalisme* style by a former *Time* reporter and historian of China, Viet Nam, etc. Useful adjuncts include a chronology and cast list. The record is not wholly edifying, but the narrative grips despite tiny print and a mis-spelling of Macaulay.

The Presence of Myth. By LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI. University of Chicago Press, £15.95, $22.95.

Written in Polish in 1966, published in the original in Paris in 1972, and in German in 1973, this, says the author, is "a very, very old book". But truth and insight don't stale; and by revealing the fragile and creative tension between rationality and mythic thought Kolakowski vindicates the human brain against any clever-monkey computer.

Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth Century Society. Edited by GORDON MARSDEN. Longman, £7.95.

Sixteen essays from *History Today*, plus the editor's thoughtful introduction: on education, patronage, Dickens, Pugin, Titus Salt, Samuel Smiles, George Godwin, Gladstone, Joseph Chamberlain, Herbert Spencer, Christian Socialism, Mary Kingsley, aesthetics, Edward Carpenter, and Englishness. Uneven but deeply illuminating an age of over-confidence and self-doubt.

Katherine Mansfield: Selected Letters. Edited by VINCENT O'SULLIVAN. Oxford University Press, £6.95.

Welcome paperback of sensible 1989 selection of 164 complete letters out of the *Collected Letters*' five volumes, 70 of them to Middleton Murry (out of more than 350 to him). Now and then, best behaviour: mostly, spontaneous immediate reports from the personal and literary fronts—sparkling.

Eunuchs for Heaven: The Catholic Church and Sexuality. By UTA RANKE-HEINEMANN. André Deutsch, £14.95.

Blistering attack on neurotic "theological garbage"—worship of virginity, horror at "unclean" menstrual blood, downgrading of marriage as second-best, ban on mechanical contraception (but acceptance of "rhythm method" which less reliably seeks same result), etc. A *succès de scandale* in Germany.

The Jesuit Factor: A Personal Investigation. By PETER RAWLINSON. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.00.

A former Attorney General, Lord Rawlinson is no duffer at weighing evidence; so the fact of his being a cradle Catholic by no means invalidates his shrewd and vivid reporting, though he treads warily with Liberation theology. Incidental intelligence, to me at least: the Archbishop of Manila is Cardinal Sin.

Letters to Merline (1919-1922). By RAINER MARIA RILKE. Robson Books, £14.95.

"Merline" was Baladine Klossowska, mother of the painter Balthus, and an old friend who became one of Rilke's lovers. Mostly written in French, and published in Paris in 1950, they tenderly and intimately cover the conception of the *Duino Elegies*, yet curiously use tenderness to fend off intrusion.

Postcards from the End of the World: An Investigation into the Mind of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna. By LARRY WOLFF. Collins, £15.00.

Freud, Mahler, Schnitzler, Kraus? No: psycho-history in *faits divers*: four celebrated cases of child-battering and murder, which Professor Wolff analyses mainly along Freudian lines, implying that they're symptomatic. Fascinating, but a little as if Alexander Woollcott, crime ghoul, meets Siegfried Kracauer, of *From Caligari to Hitler* fame.

R.M.

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LANGUAGE

On Opening the Revised English Bible

Poetry, Fashion & Thought-Forms—By OLIVER KNOX

AFTER THE seventh day of creation, we are told that there were still no shrubs or plants growing on the earth because: "The Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground . . ." (*AV*, *Genesis*, 2.5). Those are the familiar words from the second chapter of *Genesis*, in the *Authorised Version* addressed to "the Most High and Mighty Prince James" by the translators who wished him "grace, mercy and peace". Moving to today, the revisers of the *Revised English Bible*[1] address themselves to a more modern audience. In the same passage they stoop to contemporary wisdom, and make an effort, even before the appearance of Adam and Eve, to placate today's susceptibilities. The tiller (or tiller-to-be) loses his/her sex:

> "The Lord God had sent no rain; nor was there anyone to till the ground. Moisture used to well up out of the earth and water all the surface of the ground. The Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground . . . ."

Emasculation, of course, is one of the principal aims of the new version. As Donald Coggan, Chairman of the Joint Committee of the Churches, says in his preface:

> "The use of male-oriented language, in passages of traditional versions of the Bible which evidently apply to both genders, has become a sensitive issue in recent years; the revisers have preferred more inclusive gender reference where that has been possible without compromising scholarly integrity or English style . . . ."

What has been lost by this kowtowing to a "sensitive issue"? Well, it is very much easier to see in our mind's eye a *man* tilling the soil than a human being. In any case, God will, as we know, within a very few verses create Adam, at which point gender arises, however regrettable that may be. So one might reasonably ask why this first reference to him is as "a human being"—that creature surely never mentioned outside the biology classroom in the "natural vocabulary of today" which the revisers avowedly strive to reproduce. The first price paid for emasculation is a loss of vividness.

A sexless angel is possible to imagine; a sexless human is a contradiction (unless one enters the country of epicenes). Against this, it *may* just be possible—or is it?—to imagine that one or two readers might be gratified by this early attempt to avoid "male-oriented language" wherever it is humanly possible. And, then, compare the cadences of the two paragraphs. As Dr Coggan says in his preface:

> "Care has been taken to ensure that the style of English used is fluent and of appropriate dignity for liturgical use, while maintaining intelligibility for worshippers of a wide range of ages and backgrounds. The revisers have sought to avoid complex and technical terms . . . and to provide sentence structure and word order . . . which will facilitate congregational reading . . . ."

It is perfectly true that "Moisture used to well up out of the earth and water all the surface of the ground" is fluent, not undignified, and fairly intelligible—unobjectionable in almost every way. But can the translator have used his ears? Will the sentence have any chance of entering into the minds and souls of those who hear it read at the lectern (or, if you prefer, will its cadence "facilitate congregational reading")?

THE NATURE OF religious language is not discussed by the revisers. Such qualities as clarity, intelligibility, modernity, and the avoidance of archaisms are baldly stated in the prefaces to the Old and the New Testament as though they were self-evidently desirable ones. But are they? Should not

[1] The differences between the *New English Bible* (first published complete, with both the New and Old Testaments, in 1970) and its revision which is named the *Revised English Bible* (Oxford University Press/Cambridge University Press, 1989) are, of course, infinitesmal compared to those between the latter translation and the *Authorised Version*. It is quite beyond the purposes of this essay or the competence of the essayist to pronounce on the theological merits of the newer versions (although it seems that the *Revised English Bible* is in some ways more conservative than its immediate predecessor). It is the nature of the language of both the new versions which is under discussion, with particular regard paid to the *Revised English Bible*, which clearly sets out in its preface some of its principal objectives: "*you*-forms for *thou*-forms"; avoidance of "male-oriented language"; and preference for "more inclusive gender reference", etc. These aims may well have been achieved. But the worth of the achievement is debatable.

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religious language be a special language, with a special purpose? In listening to it, or reading it, we scarcely expect to employ the same faculties as when we consider a passage, say, of history. We hope, or pray perhaps, to be given grace to exercise such talents as we may have been given for feeling awe, mystery, pity, marvel. Under the influence of the sound of such a language we wish to be clothed in the apparel of faith, and see not so much clearly and exactly as dimly and suggestively.

We might, perhaps, ask whether a language which follows such an imprecise, evocative path, dealing along the way with mysterious landmarks half-seen in mist and shadows, and tending (for "leading" would be too definite a word) towards a point ineffable and unknowable—we might ask whether, in a world governed by material and scientific considerations, such a Himalayan language is worth preserving, let alone using, at all. Or, if it is, whether it should not be left in some brackish pool, occasionally to be visited by historians, poets, and scholars.

For the disciplines which enable us to receive "the words of God" are very different (though no less demanding) to those which we must acquire for the understanding of scientific or technical or economic "truths". The reading, as well as the writing, of religious language sets it apart from activities which are only of this world.

> "A method is necessary for the understanding of images, symbols, etc. One should not try to interpret them, but contemplate them until their significance flashes upon one—they should first of all be taken in a purely literal sense, and contemplated thus, for a considerable time. Then they should be taken in a less literal fashion and contemplated thus, and so on, by degrees . . . . [This is] a method for exercising the intelligence which consists of beholding."

Simone Weil, in whose *Notebooks* (1956) this passage appears, evidently recognised the value of "beholding" when discussing religious experience. It is not a word, however, which finds favour with the revisers. "See" or "look" is less archaic, less pretentious; and often—why not?—it can be omitted altogether. Thus the birth of Christ is described in St Matthew's Gospel in the *Authorised Version*:

> ". . . [Mary] was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream . . . now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, behold a virgin shall be with child . . . ."
>
> *Matthew*, 1.20

The mystery of the incarnation becomes for the revisers—in their search "to use consistently the idiom of contemporary English . . . and to avoid archaisms, technical terms and pretentious language as far as possible"—a much more matter-of-fact affair, as though it was seen through the eyes of, say, a scrupulous Civil Servant:

> ". . . before their marriage she found she was going to have a child through the Holy Spirit. Being a man of principle, and at the same time wanting to save her from exposure, Joseph made up his mind to have the marriage contract quietly set aside . . . when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream . . . all this happened to fulfil what the Lord declared through the prophet: 'A virgin shall conceive and bear a son. . . .'" *REB*

Even in the most mysterious passages of the Bible, where revelations, portents, visions abound, the revisers do not consider that the language should reflect wonderment, or that the reader should ever be exhorted to "behold". In Daniel's visions and dreams:

> "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent . . . ."
>
> *AV*, *Daniel*, 2.31

> "As you watched, there appeared to your majesty a great image. Huge and dazzling . . . ." *REB*

> "I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great . . . ." *AV*, *Daniel*, 4.10

> "As I was looking, there appeared a very lofty tree at the centre of the earth; the tree grew great . . . ." *REB*

> "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn . . . and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man . . . ."
>
> *AV*, *Daniel*, 7.8

> "While I was considering the horns there appeared another horn, a little one . . . and in this horn there were eyes like human eyes . . . ." *REB*

NEVER TO BE ASKED to "behold" is perhaps something more than a sign of determination to put the mystery of the Bible within the everyday grasp of the average man (an aim, it may be remarked in passing, not without a trace of patronising presumption). It suggests that the revisers believe that what is ineffable, wonderful, hidden, mysterious *needs* no special language and should, so far as possible, be treated in a way indistinguishable from language used in the ordinary traffic of life. Could it be that not only do they regard mysteries as above the heads of modern readers but that they mistrust, or shun, the idea of mystery as far as they possibly can? Is the demystification of the Bible their true goal?

In ancient languages, mystery and obscurity flourish side by side in treating of the ways in which Men and the Gods—or God—deal with each other. In Ancient Greece, Zeus gathers the clouds, revels in the thunder, and flashes the shafts of lightning through the dark sky. Hence the epithets which he enjoys; he is a God who darkens and a God who reveals. Language which wraps the truth in obscurity and offers momentary, brilliant light in the midst of great gloom (*obscuris vera involvens*) deserved admiration. The sayings of God and his prophets often appeared to say one thing and mean another. Men heard dark parables and oracles, and out of pride or self-deception often misinterpre-

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ted them. That was only to be expected. But religious language was not thereby a fraud. On the contrary. Mysteries, enigmas, and false clues everywhere entrap us in the world of the senses—how much more must we expect them on the uncertain boundaries of human and divine speech!

On the one side, such thoughts may well be uncongenial to those who prefer to tell the "simple" tale of the New Testament, and its "straightforward" message of atonement and salvation, in words and phrases which are accessible to ordinary men and women of the late 20th century, with their ordinary hopes and fears and prejudices. Why dwell on what is obscure, when so much is easily understood? Why translate into the mysterious language of religion (which often enters our souls by means that we do not understand), rather than try to clarify?

On another side, they are uncongenial to what is perhaps a more sinister wing, or tendency, of churchmen—which embraces those who seek to demolish the fixedness of landmarks on the borders of knowledge. To *admit* mystery, after all, with however many qualifications and pleas for clarity, is at least to acknowledge that some thing or things, some person or persons, exist beyond one's grasp, who or which hide (or occasionally reveal) some truth not belonging to the dimension of time. But to *reject* mystery is not only to make assumptions about the universal validity of the language of science, with its criteria of verification, and so on. It is also to deny the absoluteness of that which may lie behind the mists of tradition, and to seek refuge in various species of relativism.

IN SHORT, is religious language moribund because religion is moribund—the offerings of the marketplace or of the laboratory having driven out the hearing and beholding of the spiritual word?

Certainly "mystery" in the New Testament (coming from the Greek *musterion* which means "that which is known only to the initiated") is almost everywhere translated by the revisers as "secret"—the language of the temple replaced by that of the gossip.

> "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." *AV, Mark*, 4.11

> "To you the secret of the Kingdom of God has been given; but to those who are outside, everything comes by way of parables, so that (as scripture says) they may look and look, but see nothing; they may listen and listen, but understand nothing; otherwise they might turn to God and be forgiven." *REB*

> "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew." *AV, Corinthians*, 2.7

> "I speak God's hidden wisdom, his secret purpose framed from the very beginning to bring us to our destined glory. None of the powers that rule the world has known that wisdom." *REB*

> "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." *AV, Colossians*, 4.3

> "Include us in your prayers, asking God to provide an opening for the gospel, that we may proclaim the secret of Christ, for which I am indeed in prison." *REB*

But God surely moves in mysterious ways, not in secret ones. Mysteries, demanding contemplation and defying understanding, lie close to the heart of the language of religion. Mysteries are not a slave to time, pay no regard to what is relevant to our daily preoccupations. Their value is their almost infinite capacity to furnish truths which anyone who pays them religious attention can see—or at least glimpse. But since the truths which they enshroud are eternal and absolute, and it is only our expression and our vision which are imprecise and blurred, mysteries are an enemy to the relativism which has taken over the modernist, liberal, Anglican mind. Those who diminish their importance (and to call them "secrets" does exactly that) and concentrate instead on everyday language and no-nonsense clarity, may not much regret the violence which they do to tradition. The revisers have professed, after all, that "in accordance with the original decision of the Joint Committee of Churches" they have attempted consistently to use the "idiom of contemporary English".

One wonders what there is about the liberal Establishment—any liberal Establishment, whether of religion or politics or letters—which makes its members love the ephemeral, hate the traditional, bow to fashion, cock a snook at ceremony. To such liberals, there is something wrong, even offensive, about being handed down an *ageless* truth; acceptance of such trusteeship cribs and confines liberty, contradicts the spirit of the age. The saying of Dean Inge, "To be wedded to the spirit of today means that you are widowed tomorrow", does not even amuse them. One should be as up-to-date in one's language as one should be up-to-date in everything; a religious language smells of yesterday's incense.

IN THE presence of a work of art, one needs, surely, to have long patience and contemplate possible truth, in every word or every cadence, every chord or every colour. Quick reading and a scorn of style, a hungry search for the essential and practical meaning—this admirable virtue of senior Civil Servants, less admirable perhaps in modern bishops—is inimical to the language of religion, with its sonorous, long-drawn out appeal to tradition and misty continuity. Consider closely the differences between the revisers and the servants of King James, in their rendering of passages of *Ecclesiastes:* they are minor, but more than a matter of taste or accuracy is at stake.

> "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." *AV, Ecclesiastes*, 1.2

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> "Futility, utter futility, says the Speaker, everything is futile." *REB*

(A sentiment which might well be more appropriate in the House of Commons.)

> "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven:
> a time to be born and a time to die;
> a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
> a time to kill and a time to heal;
> a time to break down and a time to build up;
> a time to weep and a time to laugh;
> a time to mourn and a time to dance;
> a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together;
> a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
> a time to seek and a time to lose;
> a time to keep and a time to cast away;
> a time to rend and a time to sew;
> a time to keep silence and a time to speak;
> a time to love and a time to hate;
> a time of war and a time of peace." *AV, Ecclesiastes*, 3

> "For everything its season, and for every activity under heaven its time:
> a time to be born and a time to die;
> a time to plant and a time to uproot;
> a time to kill and a time to heal;
> a time to break down and a time to build up;
> a time to weep and a time to laugh;
> a time for mourning and a time for dancing;
> a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them;
> a time to embrace and a time to abstain from embracing;
> a time to seek and a time to lose;
> a time to keep and a time to discard;
> a time to tear and a time to mend;
> a time for silence and a time for speech;
> a time to love and a time to hate;
> a time for war and a time for peace." *REB*

Why substitute for "a time to rend" (which brings to mind lacerated cheeks and garments some thousands of years ago in Palestine) the casual "tear" (coming from some slip, perhaps, in consigning a dress to the washing-machine)? Why change the solemn measure of "a time to mourn and a time to dance" for the light-hearted "a time for mourning and a time for dancing"? No change of sense is apparent in such slight emendations. But doesn't a purpose lie behind them?

LITERATURE SENT OUT to Bishops of the Anglican Community in preparation for the 1988 Lambeth Conference contained the revealing passage quoted in William Oddie's *The Crockford's File*[2]:

> "[Our traditional doctrinal formularies] do not meet all our doctrinal needs. They are often couched in thought-forms which we no longer employ; they may reflect cultures which are alien to the Church in some parts of the world; they do not always take into account developments in human knowledge and experience; and they do not answer new questions which have arisen since they have been formulated."

Couched in thought—forms! Here is a plea for deliberate discontinuity. But it is more than that. As William Oddie demonstrates, it indicates how the modern, progressive, Anglican mind is tending, fatally, towards relativism. This mind cannot, of course, admit quite so much without denying God altogether. But as much tradition as possible, as many truths as possible, must be acknowledged *really* to rest on shifting sands, *really* to need constant readjustment to changing "thought-forms".

SUCH IS the supposition which seems to colour the revisers work; and it dictates a thousand tiny amendments—few of them perhaps spoiling the sense, all of them doubtless scholarly, all of them well-intentioned, and designed to be helpful to our impoverished minds—but many of them destructive of cadence, heedless of continuity, and unaware of the history and justification of the usage of religious language.

A last example of the victory of everyday language. Many will have heard at evensong:

> "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." *AV, Romans*, 8.38, 39

An early 20th-century commentator, Arthur Peake, said that "the passage has the lilt of Hebrew poetry; it was penned in a rapture". The revisers are less mysterious.

> "For I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths—nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." *REB*

Reading both passages out loud, there is no doubt which is more evocative, more suggestive, closer to the cadences of poetry. Nor is there much question that the sense of the passage is easier to glimpse in the *REB*—at least for the quick reader—than in the *Authorised*. It both sounds and is more matter of fact, closer to everyday speech and contemporary culture, just indeed as the "translators' panels" wished. A generation brought up on space fiction does not stumble over the "forces of the universe" of the new version as it may well over the opaque and ominous "powers" (which is, however, the literal meaning of the Greek word). But this willing conformity to the modern mind, which appears to the progressive mind of today's Anglican Establishment to be a goal so self-evidently to be desired—whether in Bible translation, or in liturgy, or in

[2] William Oddie, *The Crockford's File: Gareth Bennett and the Death of the Anglican Mind* (Hamish Hamilton, 1989).

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religious communication of any kind, is exactly the proposition to be contended. To quote again from Dr Oddie's *The Crockford's File*:

> "There exists, then, a tension between a Christianity which is given and objective and which it is 'important to have . . . right' on the one hand, and a Christianity whose expression and content are constantly at the behest of culture and circumstance on the other. It is a tension between a dogmatic Christianity, beyond our grasp but at least offering something we can know with certainty, and an anti-dogmatic Christianity which is perpetually remade to be accessible to culture and conformable to human intellect, and which regards certainty of any kind as being a sign of immaturity, even of neurosis."

The atrophy of religious language, so nonchalantly accepted—if not, indeed, encouraged—by the revisers, might leave one so without hope as to assert, roundly, that the best course was to open everybody's ears and eyes to the *Authorised Version*, and have done with further translation. That is tempting. But it is a counsel of despair. Some future age is likely to be less craven than ours, and may wish to rescue for the English tongue the uses—the sounds and images, the obscurities and illuminations—of religious language. After all there have been well over twenty renderings of the Bible since William Tyndale's translation was printed in 1525.[3]

The desire to translate the Bible is a noble and inextinguishable one. Only let, however, the translator wholeheartedly embrace the difficulties of expressing the inexpressible; and of setting out the mysteries, not the discernible secrets, of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, so that they simultaneously reflect solid truths which are everlasting, and tell of actual events set in a fleeting moment of time: the former ineffable for all their solidity, the latter real for all their transience.

It is the effort to walk an impossible tightrope, with a mind and soul that cares nothing for today's temporary "thought-forms", which inspires the representation of religion—with its acceptance on the one hand of inevitable ambiguity, and of the need to wrap truths in darkness, and on the other its insistence on the actuality of historical revelation. The tension cannot, of course, be resolved; but it can give birth—to take another medium—to such great, impassible works of religious art as the *Resurrection* of Piero della Francesca, and to such a great work of religious language as the Bible of the Most High and Mighty Prince James.

[3] Many also think it important (and profitable) that the Bible should enter the computer age by means other then merely those of new and revised translations. A recent advertisement runs:

> "Now the most widely read book in the world is combined with the latest electronic technology—to provide a new medium for what could be described as the greatest reading in the Western world. . . a built-in electronic concordance means you can search the entire Bible in a matter of seconds by entering book, chapter, verse, single word . . . and display relevant texts in the large, easy-to-read 8-line 320-character screen. Scroll through the entire work, or call up any chapter in an instant, and return to favourite texts using the electronic 'bookmark' . . . the Electronic Bible weighs just 12 ounces and measures 3½ x 6 x 3¼ inches so you can carry it with you anywhere. There's also a clock, alarm and calculator for personal use. . . ."

Mercies

We are, as we have been told we should be,
for small mercies, grateful. Larger mercies
prove more discriminating, actually

choosing carefully on whom they descend.
Politicians sometimes bestow them, though
where they get them from, we don't understand.

Huge mercies are often called blessings. Then
priests hold them in their hands and are very
generous with them. They give everyone

a sign, after which God comes among us.
Trouble is nothing changes. We all go
on behaving as before, and to bless

us confirms our unholy alliance
with each other. How revolutionary
it would be if we shook off this reliance

on the falling of mercies great and small—
taking it upon ourselves to think more
lovingly and stop wailing at the wall.

Ivan White

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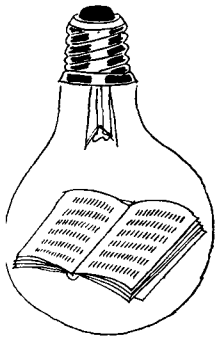
EDUCATION

The Legacy of "a Racist Murder"

Death in the Playground—By GEOFFREY PARTINGTON



ONE 13-YEAR-OLD stabbed another to death in the playground of a Manchester comprehensive school. It happened on 17 September 1986. The fact that the victim was non-white and the killer white led to widespread controversy about race relations in Burnage High School in particular, and Manchester's school system in general. The Manchester City Council appointed a Committee of Inquiry (whose report was not published until 1989) to investigate the killing and its background, and further to advise on "what can be done to eliminate or reduce racial harassment, racial violence and racism in school". The four members of the Macdonald Inquiry are described in their report as: Ian Macdonald, Q.C. (Chairperson, specialist in civil liberties and in immigration and nationality law), Reena Bhavnani (Education Consultant and trainer in women's issues); Lily Khan (Former Commissioner on the Commission for Racial Equality and co-ordinator of London's Bangladeshi Homeless Families Project); and Gus John (Director of Education, London Borough of Hackney, and former Vice-Principal of Community Education, South and North Manchester). The Macdonald account of the situation in Burnage High School, and of related aspects of schooling in Manchester, is both informative and alarming. Its general analysis and proposals for change are equally alarming; and the whole report is presented in injudicious language, as well as in non-judicial form.[1]

The Killer

DARREN COULBURN lived with his father, who had suffered three heart attacks—whether Darren's conduct could have contributed towards them remains unknown. During primary-school years Darren frequently engaged in bullying and extortion from smaller boys of all creeds and colours, and he was frequently late for school when not playing truant. As a Burnage High School student, Darren came to school drunk at least once; was brought to school by police who had seen him knocking on doors of houses he had reason to think temporarily unoccupied; and appeared in the Juvenile Court for stealing a motor cycle, and for burning down (in company with an Asian pupil) the school art block during the school holidays.

Darren was spared the indignity of institutionally inflicted physical pain, as in 1982 Manchester Education Committee abolished corporal punishment in its schools (at least in so far as it was administered by teachers to pupils). But he did not escape scot-free. After being found guilty of burning down the art block, he was sentenced to 24 hours at an "Attendance Centre". Several Burnage teachers suggested Darren be transferred to another school—but the Headmaster, Dr Gerald Gough, successfully opposed this, on the grounds that the lad had already been punished once for his offence. Dr Gough failed to acquaint his Governors with staff disquiet about Darren's return when he persuaded them to adopt his proposal. A Deputy Head with responsibility for pastoral care was asked in January 1986 to "monitor Darren's progress in school", but since Dr Gough did not wish to stimulate adverse expectations about Darren, few teachers knew of any monitoring.

However, Darren's behaviour in the spring term of 1986, such as his setting-off a fire-alarm and breaking school windows, together with several out-of-school incidents, both in and out of school hours, led to Darren being sent to an "Intermediate Treatment Centre" for a month at the end of the summer term. Despite the recommendation of an Educational Welfare Officer attached to Burnage High and of several of Darren's teachers that he be transferred to a smaller school (Burnage had some 1,500 boys), a social worker (working on his first adolescent case after qualifying) was successful in securing his return to Burnage. The social worker was confident that the change noted in Darren in the Centre from "withdrawal to violent reaction to teasing" by other boys was a good sign.

Back at Burnage High, Darren beat up a boy from a nearby junior school during break on the first day of the Autumn term. He was soon wreaking violence on a number of smaller boys (mostly Asian) in his own class. The worries of his class teacher were passed to the Head of Department, then to one of the Deputy Heads, then to the "Senior

[1] Ian Macdonald, Reena Bhavnani, Lily Khan, Gus John, *Murder in the Playground: The Report of the Macdonald Inquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester Schools* (Longsight Press, 1989).

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Advisory Teacher concerned with disruptive students", and, then, since race might be involved, to the Head of Community Education, who contacted an educational psychologist "concerned with problems of racism". Interesting discussions took place as to whether Darren's nasty ways were "racist" or had other origins and motives. But, so far as is known, no action was taken to make life safer for Darren's schoolmates.

The Murder

AHMED IQBAL ULLAH's family is one of many that came to Manchester from Bangladesh during the last 25 years. Ahmed had evidently made good progress at primary school and during his first year at Burnage High. But subsequently (according to his older sister, who became prominent in communal activities related to Ahmed's death), he seemed to lose interest in school life, became involved in fights, and alleged that some of his teachers were unsympathetic to Asian boys. The Macdonald report notes that fights with a racial dimension in Manchester schools were not always between whites and non-whites, and that in a three-cornered situation "Afro-Caribbeans" (the current authorised term) sometimes joined with whites against Asians.

Ahmed seems to have been prominent in supporting smaller Asian boys against assailants of the Darren type. On Tuesday 16 September he worsted Darren in a fight caused by Darren's beating up of an Asian boy on the way home from school the previous day. The next morning before school their fight resumed, with Ahmed taking the initiative. This time Darren had armed himself with a knife. At approximately 8.30 a.m. he stabbed Ahmed with what proved to be a fatal blow, and Ahmed lay bleeding in the playground.

Burnage High leapt into action. The duty master, Head of Languages, sent to the school office for help; a female senior teacher arrived on the scene at 8.42 and went to fetch a school secretary who had first-aid training; and a Deputy Head arrived at 8.45, the time at which an ambulance was finally sent for from the school office. An ambulance arrived at the school at 9.09, but the police, who arrived at 8.58, put Ahmed in a police car to take him to hospital at 9.05. Ahmed was clinically lifeless when the police car reached the hospital, dead on arrival.

The Aftermath

BURNAGE HIGH'S "Head of Community Education was Lesley Aisthorpe, on whose expertise Dr Gough relied in the difficult aftermath of Ahmed's death. On her advice, Deputy Head, Peter Moors, phoned an Asian parent who agreed to act as an interpreter at the hospital for the dead boy's family (even though his mother and sister were fluent in English, a fact known to Ahmed's form teacher and Year Head who were not consulted). Dr Gough did not visit the Ullah family, nor did any staff member or representative of the Education Department or City Council.

On the afternoon of the murder, however, a meeting was held between senior Burnage staff and members of the education bureaucracy and of local Asian organisations. The Macdonald Report relied for information about this meeting on a memorandum written the following day by the representative of the activist Manchester Council for Community Relations—he wrote that Dr Gough had misinformed them that two other white boys (besides Darren) had attacked Ahmed the previous evening. Dr Gough also implied in a letter to parents that Ahmed's death had taken place outside the school, in the nearby park. To defend themselves against the reasonable suspicion of inadequate supervision in their school, the Burnage representatives emphasised the racial dimension of the assault—"racism" being something originating in the outside community and thus beyond their control.

On the following day, Deputy Head Moors sent a letter, prepared for him by Ms Aisthorpe, to all group tutors in Burnage High, which suggested how they might best discuss Ahmed's death with their pupils The first point "which might be raised by way of an introduction" was that:

> "Ahmed Ullah died as a result of racism. The dispute leading to his death happened as a result of his attempts to protect students from racial abuse. . . ."

This may, of course, have been part of the truth, although it would have been equally true (and as unhelpful) to declare that Ahmed died as a result of a failure by Manchester Education Committee and Burnage High School to establish adequate control over the conduct and safety of pupils in their charge. Ms Aisthorpe's claim directly contradicted the police statement that the killing was a non-racist incident.

ON 22 SEPTEMBER, Dr Gough wrote to all parents to let them know that Ahmed's funeral would take place the following afternoon. The school would close for that session as a mark of respect, and all students would be able to attend the funeral. A form was enclosed by which parents could give approval for their sons' attendance. At lunchtime next day, staff and boys alike were prepared to board the buses ordered to take them to the funeral. Instead, they were assembled in the school hall to be told by Deputy Head Moors that only Asian boys were to attend the funeral since, "on information received", it was considered unwise for white or Afro-Caribbean students to attend. The police had no hand in this decision, which deeply distressed many of Ahmed's white and black friends, some of whom expressed the fear that they were being grouped together with Darren Coulburn. Dr Gough subsequently defended himself by claiming that he had been warned by "somebody significant in the Asian community" that there would be trouble at the funeral from Asian activists if non-Asian students attended; but he never revealed the identity of this supposed informant.

The Pakistani Workers Association took the lead in taking political action in response to Ahmed's death. At first, permission to hold a meeting in Bangladeshi House was refused (some Afro-Caribbeans had been invited to attend), but an

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"Ahmed Iqbal Memorial Committee" was soon set up, with a brief to mobilise white and Afro-Caribbean anti-racists as well as Asians. The Greater Manchester Bangladeshi Association meanwhile forged ahead, and on 1 October issued a leaflet headed "Death of a Bangladeshi Boy" which stated:

> "Ahmed opposed the racial harassment of younger Asian students and was stabbed to death for his action. It is disgraceful and disturbing that on the morning of his death, adults were busy in attempting to conceal the truth . . . the little that has been reported by the media implies that no racial motive can be attributed, though the school, Education Department and the City Council have admitted that Ahmed was the victim of a racist assault."

The leaflet went on to demand an independent judicial inquiry to investigate racism in Manchester schools, and Burnage in particular. The "Terms of Reference" of the Inquiry were to be outlined by the Greater Manchester Bangladeshi Association. In addition, it demanded the setting up of "an affirmative action programme in all the educational institutions in the City, to expand the limited opportunities of employment for Asians (particularly Bangladeshi)".

THE TONE of the Memorial Committee's publications soon made those of the Manchester Bangladeshi Association seem very mild. In February 1987 Darren Coulburn was found guilty in the Crown Court of murder, and received "the heaviest sentence open to the judge of detention at Her Majesty's pleasure". His appeal against sentence was dismissed later in the year, but the Memorial Committee was dissatisfied with the judicial process. Its pickets at Darren's trial issued a leaflet alleging that:

> "Ahmed Iqbal Ullah was brutally stabbed to death by a racist white youth. . . . Since the murder, a conspiracy to cover up the racist nature of this barbaric attack has taken place. The police made statements immediately after the murder saying that it was not racist. . . . The Headmaster of the school has gone so far as to send letters saying Ahmed was not murdered in the school . . . . Whilst Ahmed lay bleeding to death, the school authorities at first refused to listen to his screams. . . . The murder of Ahmed is a reflection of a deep-rooted racism within British society. Racist attacks and attackers will not go away by being ignored. . . . Ahmed's murder has once again shown that the authorities in general and the police in particular are neither capable nor willing to defend us. Therefore, we must defend ourselves. The only way that our children can be safe at school is for them to organise their own Self-Defence."

The Macdonald Report commented on the publications of the Memorial Committee and the Manchester Bangladeshi Association: "There is no doubt that their leaflets were angry; they exaggerated; and the tone was intemperate. But the bald fact of the matter is that no one else was attempting to address the issue with a similar honesty or commitment. . . ."

Self-Defence

IN FEBRUARY 1987 a group of Asian boys in Burnage High complained to Deputy Head J. Hewitt that some white boys were forming gangs, to which he replied that their group might look like "a gang" to others. For this response, even though he warned school assemblies against "gang-formation", and urged students with any fears to report them to the staff, Mr Hewitt was sharply condemned in the Report. By March, Asian students in the senior school had formed a powerful defensive group or gang which prepared "a hit-list" of about a dozen white boys accused of bullying and assaults. Once the staff realised (on 24 March) that the dozen were targets for assault by over 150 Asian boys, not all of them Burnage students, they were locked in the gym during the morning "for their protection" and advised not to leave the school during the lunch hour. Although the dozen boys were, with difficulty, able to enter the dining-hall for their lunch, large numbers of Asian youths tried to break down its doors to get at them. A dinner lady led them to a small storeroom leading off the kitchen, and again they were locked in "for their safety". A teacher managed to contact the father of one of the white boys, who arrived at the back gates to the kitchen area with a transit van.

The Report notes, blandly, that "it is quite clear that many Asian students had gained strength and confidence from involvement in the demonstrations and pickets organised around the aftermath of Ahmed's death and the trial of Darren Coulburn. . . ." On the other hand, as the Report concedes (despite much rhetoric about White Racism and the National Front):

> "Other than hanging around together in groups or gangs and getting up to a certain amount of mischief, usually at the expense of Asian students, there is little evidence of any organisation among the white students. Racist groups from outside the school may have been around and may have dropped leaflets in the school, but they have played no significant part at all, so far as we could discover. . . . The polarisation of the white students was nothing to do with any active organisation on their part. Rather, they were left to their own devices, as the Asian students talked, discussed, and took common action together."

The father of the white boy who rescued the other dozen boys was never thanked by the school. One boy, who could not attend school for fear of being on a hit-list of white racists, was the older brother of a boy who had been very friendly with Ahmed. Deputy Head Hewitt told one parent he could not guarantee the safety of his son in school, and another (the driver of the transit van) was told, on enquiring about his son's 5th-year exams, "it might be a case of doing the exams and having no son". It was left to two youth workers, Geoff Turner and Mukhtar Khares, to make some liaison with families. Geoff Turner reported that the school had briefed him that he was going to be dealing with "very racist white youths". But, instead, he found them

> ". . . an intelligent and neatly dressed group of boys who in all respects mirrored the Asian students who had put them on a hit-list. He constantly checked and tested, and

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finally satisfied himself that none of them had any contact with racist organisations. . . ."

Irrespective of what their characters might be, the white boys on the hit-list were effectively expelled from Burnage High. Dr Gough and his staff made no effort to bring them back to school; on the contrary, Dr Gough informed their families on 1 April 1987 (not as a joke, unfortunately) that he had made arrangements for them to take their exams at another school. It had been impossible to exclude Darren Coulburn for burning down the art block, but it was easy to exclude twelve other boys on the basis of unspecified accusations of racism. "Self-defence" among Asian students had certainly enjoyed huge success.

The Macdonald Report, to its credit, condemns this counter-racism strongly and comments:

> "We have no doubt at all that if it had been a group of Asian or Afro-Caribbean boys who had been forcibly withdrawn from the school because their safety was threatened by a large group of white boys . . . there would have been an almighty uproar. . . . Some of the parents and some of the boys affected came round to give us their evidence. We were greatly impressed by their moderation and restraint. But they were justifiably angry and resentful at the treatment they had received . . . some of the students had decided not to go on to college because they feared they would meet up with the Asian students. . . ."

Of Dr Gough they comment, ". . . it is sad to see a man, who is committed to principles that we would hold dear, being responsible for one of the most obvious acts of discrimination we have come across in the course of this Inquiry."

AT LEAST ONE OTHER reported example of self-defence in schools deserves consideration. In March 1984, the Headmaster of Plant Hill High School in North Manchester (as it happens, only about two miles from my childhood home) phoned the local police to report that over 30 black youths, armed with baseball-bats and sticks, had broken into his school, entered three classrooms in search of unidentified but presumably white students, and attacked two teachers who tried to restrain them. A memorandum submitted to Manchester's Chief Education Officer, Gordon Hainsworth, by one of his officials, condemned the Head for failing to consider that:

> ". . . his school might be harbouring racists and National Front members and sympathisers, and that they may well have made some of those black youths victims."

The official suggested that the Head was racist in reporting the intrusion to the police and that he owed it to the youths "no less than to his staff, students, and their parents to take equal pains to correct the record and give the youths' reasons for entering the school and moving from classroom to classroom"—the reason being revenge for an out-of-school assault which, they claimed, boys in Plant Hill High had inflicted on one of the group. Mr Hainsworth endorsed this view. He wrote to the governing bodies of the three schools attended by boys involved in the affair that some non-white boys had "been subjected to physical and verbal abuse by white young people and adults, many of whom are thought to have connections with the National Front" and that the intruders into Plant Hill felt that "to do nothing about the attack was to leave the way open for further attacks, to which any members of the group may have been subject". It is hardly surprising that Manchester's teacher organisations (apart from the National Union of Teachers) protested against the condemnation of Mr Speller of Plant Hill and the Chief Education Officer's apparent endorsement of the supposed right of any group, which considered itself to have a grievance, to forcibly enter a school or any other building, public or private.

Mr Hainsworth's District Inspector reported from the Plant Hill Governors' Meeting that "strong resentment was expressed about the fact that, as they saw it, teachers were not thanked by the LEA for preventing the affray escalating and that teachers received no compensation for damage suffered during the affray. . . . Teachers have now adopted the attitude that if such an incident were to occur again they would not try to intervene." The Macdonald Report supports the action of Gordon Hainsworth and says of the assault on Plant Hill: "Whatever one might think of their methods, it was not the group of black youths that involved the school. It is those they hoped to find in the school." Would a similar judgment have been made had a group of predominantly white youths broken into a school with the intention of injuring black pupils?

Anti-Racism

IN 1978 Manchester Education Committee adopted the development of "harmonious race and community relations" as a specific aim. Since its policy before 1978 had certainly not been to encourage antagonistic race and community relations, what did the new policy entail? The basis was that black children had "special needs", the satisfaction of which required that all teachers should "become aware of the cultural background of their students" and that specialist support staff be appointed with expertise in ethnic arts and crafts as well as "community languages". Manchester Education Committee held that all ethnic children had hitherto been disadvantaged by its schools, but were not alone in this since members of the working class—irrespective of race—and all girls were also disadvantaged. Only white middle-class boys, a minority in Manchester's schools, were apparently advantaged. There was considerable infighting to decide who were the worst-suffering victims. Jobs for different sorts of "Equal Opportunities experts" were at stake. The Education Committee sought "consultations" with ethnic groups; but to the disgust of the Macdonald Report did not include the Irish among them (since most groups consulted accused the Education Committee of not listening to them, the Manchester Irish perhaps did not miss much).

The Manchester Education Committee employed as many extra teachers as possible under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act to further its "multi-cultural" and "anti-

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racist" policies. Some of these were teachers whose first language was not English and who had sometimes failed to obtain teaching posts because of their inability to communicate easily in standard English, but who might well have a useful educational role in multi-racial schools. Some were professional opportunists following the latest radical political fashion. Others were ideologically motivated and hoped to use schools as sites of struggle against the evils of capitalism. The ordinary Burnage staff took a poor view of many of these Section 11 teachers, who had easy timetables with small groups and were held to be staffroom "moles" reporting subversive comments back to Dr Gough. One new Afro-Caribbean woman teacher at Burnage High, on a standard (not a Section 11) appointment, was told by a member of Section 11 when she arrived that it would be better if she did not go into the staffroom, since most of the staff were racist. It was a claim she challenged in regard to some she already knew.

> "After that, conversations with certain sections of Section 11 were very superficial . . . they spend a lot of time reading about South Africa and talking about the problem of apartheid. That's where it's at basically for them, but in terms of their relationship with me it leaves quite a lot to be desired."

She found that the teachers she was warned against as "racist" acted "most professionally in their relationship with me as a teacher and as a black woman".

Another Manchester initiative was something called EMAGS, or Ethnic Minority Advisory Groups. In these anti-racist groups, membership was by ethnicity: one white teacher who turned up to a meeting in 1987 was asked by Ms Lesley Aisthorpe, the leader of the Burnage operation, to leave, since there was a danger that "teachers would be coming in droves". Only non-white parents were invited to attend, and the Macdonald Report concludes that many white parents felt they had been discriminated against.

A SLIGHTLY MORE sensible initiative by the Education Committee was the establishment of a "Community Languages Team", intended ultimately to teach Bengali, Gujerati, Punjabi, and Urdu (but confined at this time to Urdu, the major South Asian language in South Lancashire). Teachers in this Team were discontented because Urdu "did not have the same status or importance in the curriculum as French, German, Spanish or Italian". Their only students were mother-tongue speakers. Some attributed their problems to "institutional racism". But it is unclear why native English speakers should choose Urdu either from a liberal or a vocational standpoint. Britain has enough fluent Urdu speakers to satisfy all likely commercial needs.

The central thrust of "anti-racist education", entirely endorsed by Macdonald, was to expose in as many contexts as possible the horrendous nature of past and present English racism and to advocate vigorous multi-cultural and Affirmative-Action policies to combat this hideous legacy. Many Burnage and other Manchester teachers declined to make their lessons vehicles for this message; but Section 11 staff worked hard to instill awareness of past evils and the need for a fresh start. It is not surprising that some Asian and Afro-Caribbean children concluded that they deserved every special consideration from British governments to compensate for historical wrongs . . . or that some English children resented their own depiction as uniquely villainous racists.

Turbulent Classrooms

THE NEW "anti-racist" policies went side by side with the removal from teachers of coercive powers over students. The Macdonald Report contains many hearsay charges against unnamed Manchester teachers said to have used unauthorised violence in the classroom, and it is highly critical of Burnage High School and other teachers who "feel it was a mistake to get rid of corporal punishment". Macdonald deplores the bad old days when "silence in classrooms was still equated with good classroom behaviour" and "children were regarded as receptacles for the knowledge that the teacher dispensed".

There is certainly less of that in the new order. As well as corporal punishment, detention is out, since forcible incarceration violates basic human rights, and all impositions are rejected as harmful, since school-work becomes unpleasantly associated with punishment. The Poundwick case, in which a violent Afro-Caribbean boy was reinstated in another Manchester school after suspension for assault on a woman teacher—to say nothing, again, of Burnage's failure to suspend Darren Coulburn after he burned down the art block—showed Manchester's teachers that something very serious indeed was required before suspension could be employed. It is not true to suggest that nothing was done for teachers: a large battery of counsellors and senior staff with pastoral roles, usually with very few teaching duties, was appointed. As at Burnage, many interesting discussions were held on the reasons for bad behaviour. The usual answer was the delinquent child's "low self-esteem", which any sanctions would lower still further.

The results of Manchester's great leap forward, at least in Burnage High School under Dr Gough, were summarised in a 1985 Report to the Governors by a sub-committee highly sympathetic in principle to the new policies. The sub-committee found, among other things:

> ". . . very low morale among the majority of staff; a significant lack of confidence of the majority of the staff in senior management; an alleged deterioration in the behaviour of the boys. . . ."

The Macdonald Report refers to many acts of violence with a racial dimension in Manchester schools, yet there were many more which had no such dimension. When classrooms are out of control, it is the weakest who are likely to go to the wall. One girl (aged 13, of Pakistani origin) told the Macdonald Committee that "teachers were unable to control some girls and didn't notice when they smoked or bullied others". To be sure, many teachers will turn a blind eye to cigarette-smoking 13-year-old girls, let alone aggressive 15-year-old boys, when the amount of support they are likely to receive from their Principals is small, and that from

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their Education Committee nil. The Macdonald Committee stops short of calling for schools to have effective disciplinary powers—since it is part of its overall ideology that punishment is unnecessary or harmful, juvenile misconduct being merely a response to social malaise. Yet without adequate sanctions can schools protect their pupils from bullying or harassment, whether racially linked or not?

Recommendations

THE Macdonald Report strongly supports the right of "black" families (an umbrella term which extends to the Irish) to have schools for their children which promote their own traditions and values. On the other hand, it castigates those who, like Ray Honeyford (in the famous Bradford case[2]) consider that white parents should have a similar right, since "white" values are so often sexist and racist. The question is put:

> "Have schools got a right to provide children with a racist and sexist education or have children the right to an education that is geared not to the satisfaction of narrow sectional interests of religion, of race, class, gender, parochialism, or nationalism, but enables them to establish an identity and a sense of responsibility for themselves and for others?"

The "racist and sexist education" of the first alternative does not refer to "National Front" summer-schools, but to traditional "colour-blind" English schools. Manchester families (and those in any other part of Britain) who wish their chldren to have an education "like the one they knew" are lampooned by Macdonald with comments such as:

> "Deep in the psyche of very many white people is the sub-continent of South Asia as a place where Christianity failed to make any impact upon the 'benighted heathens of the deep East'. . . ."

White parents are accused of wishing to impose a "nostalgically remembered version" of their own schooling on their children. The new generations have the right to be rescued by Macdonald, even if the parents have the support of "the likes of Ray Honeyford and Kenneth Baker".

The "references" supplied by Macdonald on race and education in general are so entirely one-sided as to be ludicrous. They include Bernard Coard, later a leading purveyor of political terror in Grenada, and the aging adolescent of agitprop, Chris Seale. But there is nothing by Professor Michael Banton of Bristol University, or any other leading scholar in the field, let alone any publication which advocates the ideal of ethnic assimilation or the principles of colour-blind pedagogy and curricula. The Rampton Report (1981) does not appear in the references, although it is condemned in the text for using the title *West Indian Children in **our** Schools* (Macdonald's emphasis). The Scarman Report (1981) is attacked for suggesting that "family break-down" may have something to do with low achievement among some Afro-Caribbean groups, whereas Macdonald knows that Britain's "institutional racism is the problem". This clearly ignores the relatively high educational achievement among families originating in Barbados and the Leeward Islands, as well as in several parts of South Asia, and the very high success rates of ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese families.

The Macdonald Report seeks to appear impartial by condemning schools in the past (that is, before local education authorities such as Manchester adopted their present policies) for ignoring white working-class culture, as well as Asian and Afro-Caribbean, in the curriculum. The Macdonald Committee found three faults in Manchester's white working-class culture: endemic child abuse; prejudice towards and violence against women; and racial hatred and violence against minority groups. "Baiting wogs", "nigger hunting" and "Paki-bashing" are all apparently part of the culture of racism in Britain in which all children are brought up. It is also there when not apparent: "covert racism is more subtle and in the long run more damaging."

The bright spot Macdonald found was a play entitled *Struggle for Freedom: The Life and Work of Len Johnson*. It is the story of a marriage between a black boxer and a Manchester Irish woman, and their friendship with Paul Robeson, and with the organisers of the first Pan-African Congress (which took place in Manchester) and with International Brigaders. This publicly-funded production for schools tells a story "in which sexist and racist culture and class conflict are laid open and bare, and the young people themselves have made the connections with these themes very clearly"—or they had better do, to pass any examination held.

One genuine pearl of wisdom offered by Macdonald is worth quoting:

> ". . . it is an interesting commentary on the current state of racial and ethnic adjustments in Manchester, and Britain as a whole, that the single most difficult racial/ethnic category to define constructively is 'English'. It is far easier to count the English as being the ones who are not anything else, and the students were aware of this. . . ."

No wonder the English have an identity crisis! They are "the ones who are not anything else".

ANY DEFENSIBLE and successful anti-racist policy should consider the susceptibilities of the indigenous as well as the newcomers. One assumes that the Macdonald Committee knew that in Karachi there is fierce Sindi antagonism to the migration of Urdu-speaking co-religionists from India or other parts of Pakistan; that the Assamese forcibly oppose Bengali-speaking immigrants, whether from Bangladesh or Indian Bengal; that Sinhalese and Tamil are at each other's throats in mixed areas of Sri Lanka; etc. By and large, the ethnocentrism and racism shown by indigenous groups in Britain is small, although it would be better, of course, if it were absent completely. It is certainly distasteful to hear racist remarks, let alone to be the subject of them, and even worse to have one's employment or safety in home, school

[2] See Max Beloff, "Unresolved Questions: Reflections after the Honeyford Case", in ENCOUNTER, May 1986.

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or street endangered because of one's race, language or culture, or indeed for any other reason. The most important steps needed to protect minorities are precisely those needed to protect us all, just as women will only be safe from rape or assault if the streets are made safer for all, i.e., safer for men as well.

It is, I think, scandalous that race relations policies in so many of Britain's cities have been determined far less by the elected government of the day than by self-appointed spokespersons of well-organised minorities. The dangerous minorities are not so much racial ones as political ones who exploit fears and grievances for their own ends, helped by the guilt-ridden of the counter-culture.[3] The Macdonald Report is written mainly in the jargon of neo-Marxism and militant feminism. It also exhibits a self-styled anti-racism which elevates race as a loaded variable in social policy in almost as destructive a way as did former racialist thinkers and demagogues. Its gravest weakness and most serious vice is to try to pin the "racist" label on all who seek colour-blind policies. It swallows camels of anti-white and anti-English racist generalisation and strains at every gnat of white narrow-minded sentiment. Macdonald is delighted when a "black community" organises campaigns against bussing (and would equally approve if the object, as in the United States, were to promote bussing); and it endorses the claim of Bernard Coard that educational psychologists deliberately devised tests which showed proportionally more Afro-Caribbean children needed remedial education than the rest of the population.

As a result of this sort of nonsense, first Haringey in London, then Manchester and many other Labour-controlled Education Authorities, dismantled the splendid support-systems for slow learners and other handicapped children, built up over the years by committed socialists as much as by anyone else in the school system. Macdonald also supports the absurd claims that "streaming" causes educational disadvantage, and demands that mixed ability classes become even more the norm. The result is that children with severe learning difficulties are in classes with some of the most clever of their age-group and, far from increasing in self-esteem, are constantly humiliated by the evidence of their own inferiority in school-work. The average teacher would find it difficult to cope with classes deliberately engineered to include the full range of achievement and ability, even if classrooms were much less turbulent than they now are and if they were racially homogeneous. All children suffer from our present-day educational follies, but none more than those disadvantaged ethnic groups who are the ostensible beneficiaries of their introduction.

Although the Macdonald Report sensibly condemns Manchester City Council and Dr Gough for their foolish ways, its own prescriptions would, overall, exacerbate rather than heal race relations, and make badly troubled classroom situations a whole lot worse.

[3] See my article, "The Disorientation of Western Education: When Progress Means Regress", in ENCOUNTER, January 1987.

Fill-dyke

There are spaces for hares alone
scooped out of rain, and bright
splash paths into the white
frost-beaded plain;

there are wet spots in emptied rooms
fastened upon our ghosts,
voices we missed or misheard,
forms we abandoned or lost.

There are vapours that summer demands:
meltwater splits at the bone
and slime on the palms of our hands
like clubmoss bleeding the stone;

there are ditches and standing floods
silent and heavy as blood,
and needles of ice in our bread
cold as the mouths of the dead.

John Burnside

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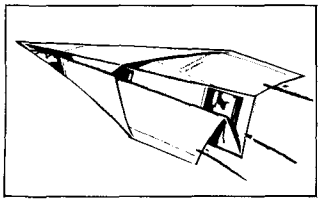
POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Letter from Budapest

The Writer's Dilemma

By George Dalos



WHEN I THINK of the high points, at times indistinguishable from the low points, of our dramatic transition from "the old days" to the new times, I register a whole series of "scandals"—this is the new trendy way of settling open accounts, of putting paid to the old. There was the scandal of the old Communist Party, now almost completely defunct, trying desperately to preserve its "people's property" by registering all that it had in the form of private companies and public capitalist corporations. Then there was the sensation of a series of "bugging" incidents on the part of the ancient secret police which was either no longer supposed to exist or to have reformed itself. Then there was the incident of the embarrassing fire at an "official bordello"; various minor affairs of corruption in sports and politics; the grotesque discovery in a lake-shore dustbin of top-secret documents regarding what used to be known as the Warsaw Pact; and, last but not least, the firing of a senior Radio and Television official which opened cans of worms involving what we are quickly learning to call the media. All of this doesn't fail to boost the circulations of new popular boulevard papers, increasingly being taken over by Western press moguls (Rupert Murdoch, Robert Maxwell, Axel Springer) who know how to blacken a front page with a flashy headline.

Literary life and intellectual affairs provide the little items in small print. Three editors of the weekly *Elet és Irodalom* resigned in protest at the "restructuring" planned by the chief editor, who was also negotiating with a "Western press baron" in order for it to be privatised as quickly as possible (although it was state property and the Ministry of Culture held all copyrights).

New sponsorship and private capital are the cultural watchwords in post-Communist Hungary. Publishers, who were previously state officials, are now beginning to think in terms of their credit-worthiness in international banking circles and of calculations of gross and net profit; and how to print more cheaply and attain more efficient distribution throughout the country. The poet, between bouts of lyrical inspiration, thinks about getting a grant to keep him going, maybe from the new foundation of George Soros (who made a fortune on Wall Street and has come back to do good in his native Budapest). That's about the extent of the poet's problem—after all, there's no longer censorship in the country.

Take a walk in the city centres, and stroll by the newsstands and bookstores: changes abound. There are new mast-heads as newspapers take advantage of their new liberty (and license). Authors whose presence was unimaginable at the kiosks or in the shops a year or two ago are available—the books of Gyorgi Konrad (a "dissident" of yesterday); the plays of Vaclav Havel; all the volumes of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, Orwell's *1984*; even (from the old East bloc) Stefan Heym's tale of the East German 17th of June Revolt, *Five Days in June*. In the beginning—only a few months ago—these were sensations, for they were, as it seemed, "forbidden fruit"; in the meantime they have almost become eligible for remaindering. An historic battle has been won, and has become old history: it was the slogan of the Hungarian revolutionaries of 1848 to establish "freedom of the press" and "the end of censorship".

The centre cannot hold any longer. The Soviet model of centralised control is gone, with a handful of State publishing houses run by the Party faithful dominating the scene. Innumerable entrepreneurs are now coming forward to offer the public new and different wares, book-lists with different accents, journals with various faces. There is *Ujhold* (*New Moon*), forbidden in 1948 because of its "bourgeois decadence"; *Hitel*, which recently featured George Urban's ENCOUNTER interview with Milovan Djilas (and therewith sold out its weekly numbers for a month); *Magyar Napló*, a long-hoped-for independent review of the restructured Writers Union; *Kapú* (*The Gate*) which has literary ambitions as a scandal-sheet. I should note also the magazine *2000*, which restores a memorable old practice of Hungarian editorial boards: no meetings in stuffy old offices but in the Café Hungaria! The same style obtains with *Mult és Jövö* which meets in the Café Lukács. Some of these publications sell 40,000 copies, some only 2,000.

THEY ALL BEGAN with euphoric enthusiasm but, sad to report, these emotions are beginning to succumb to pressures which they never knew before—the severities of real competition, and the changing patterns of readers' habits which accompany free choice. For one thing, de-bureaucratisation has shortened the previously interminable period of actually getting a book or a magazine published. In the old days it would take about two years from acceptance of a manuscript to publication date (provided, of course, the Party censors didn't want to take a second look at it or refer it to "above"). Nowadays, six months would be average for a private publishing firm. The firms that have capital (to buy paper, to get a speedy printer's contract) dictate the tempo. But a quickie like the "confessions" of the *Securitate* Chief Pacepa is rushed forward, ahead of an eagerly-awaited (and eagerly-sought) book like Miklos Haraszti's *Piece-Work* which was on the prohibited list for some 14 years. Into the new vacuum, too, hurtle strange and new subjects such as

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"Dianetics" (not to be confounded with "Esoterica"), dozens of titles under "Astrology", and, last but not least, a whole library of sexological literature, formerly unknown in these parts.

There are also new private words for critical difficulties, high among them being "bankruptcy", that frightening situation when losses, now realistically calculated, exceed profits (which sadly don't turn up on the honestly-kept ledger-books). One publisher told me that a year of open and commercial publishing did him "more harm" than all the efforts at persecution by the hated old Secret Police. He could live with constant house searches at midnight; he couldn't cope with new tax forms. But the free market is nothing if not fair. The old mammoth publishing houses of the Communist régime are also incapable of coping. One of the Party publishers tried to save the enterprise by going as far as putting on to the market a reprint edition of the newspapers of the October Revolution of 1956. I don't know whether this shamelessness was equalled (or exceeded) by a release of some porno-videos by a little Catholic publishing house which was trying to save itself from the merciless bailiffs.

Is ALL THIS good for the individual writer? Some like it, some don't. Nobody is there to prevent you from shouting your version of the truth from the roof-tops. What one critic dubbed "the free literary Hyde Park", with every speaker having his soap-box on the corner, is an historic opening. And even the quiet ones can withdraw, attend to their individual and private muse, and not be in danger of standing political trial for being unpolitical. But he still has to worry, not about tax forms (they're above him), but about meagre royalties. The new book of his poems, perhaps two years in the making, brings him about 80,000 forint, or something like 600-700 pounds, which with reviewing and the like doesn't quite round out to a passable income. The old sources of support (governmental cultural organisations) can't be counted upon to guarantee a minimum wage. Statism had rewarded him with various other financial perks for loyal "creative work"; but those hateful days are gone forever, and no one (barring some pecuniary twinge of nostalgia) wants them back. Even then, few except the most famous and successful writers actually lived from their literary work alone. Many of them worked in the press and radio, taught in the schools, even served as social workers. These inflated "statist" enterprises will be offering fewer jobs as governmental bureaucracy is diminished. Increasingly, authors will be self-employed but, to all intents and purposes, unemployed. The writer and his readers will increasingly share the same fate: "non-productive status", like old-age pensioners, abandoned wives, and footloose school-leavers. "The dictatorship of the proletariat" has disappeared, and has left among other ruins a jobless intellectual proletariat.

Still, who knows what the free market, "social" or otherwise, will bring when things change so quickly, with new ideas appealing to changing tastes in a shifting economic and cultural milieu? Yet one thing seems to be off the historic agenda—that old East European tradition (especially strong in Hungary) according to which the Writer was a prophet in his own land.

It was under the statue of Sandor Petöfi, close to the bridges across the Danube, that the October revolt began in 1848, and in 1848 Petöfi himself (who died a year later when "the freedom struggle" was repressed) announced that poets, like Moses, were divinely appointed to lead their peoples through the desert to the promised land. It wasn't a metaphor, it was a job description; and it operated even in the last decades of the Hungarian Communist dictatorship, when men of the Word confronted the men of Power. I suppose that historians would say that isolated intellectuals had to play this historic role because "civil society" didn't exist to carry the burdens of disagreement and disaffection: which is what happened in the burgeoning democratic societies of the West. In Eastern Europe the writers were the conscience of the nation; and nowhere more strongly than in the post-War totalitarian societies of Stalinised Europe when the men of *samizdat* kept the voice of freedom alive.

In the later years of the Kadar régime in Hungary there was a significant loosening of controls, and the police and the censorship were relatively relaxed. "Pluralism" was still taboo in politics and ideology, but crept into cultural criticism and new literary efforts; and over the last five years there was hardly an aspect of the social change we are at present going through that was not touched upon and underscored. Some were only metaphorical suggestions, but they were understood by students and other young intellectuals who made up the growing crowd of oppositionists that ultimately broke the back of the régime. Even the thorny issues of the minority problems in neighbouring lands—or the falling birth rate—or the corruption of the "provincial pashas"—these were themes that were handled by Hungarian writers in novels before they became confrontational political issues. In the 1960s I can recall seeing the word "underprivileged" used by social scientists who avoided the explosive word "poverty"; but the actual social conditions that existed in the poverty-stricken Communist society could be described "imaginatively" by novelists. Readers understood the ramifications of urban poverty through Konrad's novel of 1969, *Visitors*, when any other approach to the subject drove Party-line officials in Budapest into an anxiety panic.

I SUSPECT THAT in the "liberal" attitudes of the bureaucracy towards literature, conventional and avant-garde alike, there was a strong element of contempt towards "scribblers" who were "scrounging" on the State budget—then, of course, the only source of any income. There was also a propaganda-manipulative element, to the extent that the régime was keen to "improve its image" in the West, with whom it wanted to trade, borrow, make state visits, and offer a "normal" presence. As a result "literature", and not only in Hungary (think of Havel in Czechoslovakia where the supporters in Prague of *Charta 77* numbered in the hundreds only a year ago), achieved a great moral credibility. The official politics of the régimes appeared thinner and thinner, spurious and specious. To end the "thaw" or the "liberalisation" became increasingly difficult, due to vague but very real moral and psychological factors. The last

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efforts of Janos Kadar's "cultural-political" policies ended in fiasco, and were, in the context of real national problems, almost laughable.

I am not saying that the post-Stalinist Communist system in Hungary (or anywhere else) was toppled by men of letters, although innumerable writers and intellectuals, young and old, were visibly involved in the resistance movements. But "the conscience of the nation" played a role in the slow, though sometimes rapid, formation of public opinion. I think it is an historical fact that the East European structures of tyrannical power did not break down when confronted with the strength of the opposition, but disintegrated from within out of inherent weaknesses. History has its little ironies, and dogmatic ideologues who for years were preoccupied with the literary problems of how a strike or crowds in a street would be presented in a novel or a film were, in the end, confronted with the real thing: strikes, crowds, protest demonstrations.

In place of the previously diffuse literary opposition, post-Communist Hungarian society now has dozens of political parties, large and small. Most writers gravitate towards the two largest of them: the somewhat right-of-centre Democratic Forum, the rather left-of-centre Free Democrats. The former emphasises certain "national values", the latter emerges from the youthful students and human rights movements of the 1970s. The old Communist, now "Socialist", Party is rejected and humiliated, and no longer has any writers to boast about, not even hacks. Politics appears to be becoming a normal profession in Hungary. The pathos of ideological abstractions is everywhere taken to be anachronistic, and when a newspaper reporter can find a good quote he's got a splendid "scandal" for a story. Even a nicely-phrased literary formula can't work any more. It might have been explosive against tyranny, but what can it do against a rise in retail prices?

I suspect that what we will be seeing in the next period is a new effort of writers to get together—another association, a new union—in order to protect their interests. The fear of an affluent mass-culture is growing; it is taken to be threatening something which, in spite of the most vicious totalitarian repression, preserved a certain Central European continuity: the handicraft character of artistic creativity, indeed its pre-industrial charm. The public may see its tastes radically altered: the up-to-the-minute "media" possess a radical capacity, especially through television images, to transform receptivities. East as well as West may become bored with "culture". Writers, defending their own traditional interests, will surely have an important role to play, even if it will never again be as spectacular as in the days of their prophetic calling.

A Photograph of Kafka

Perched at an almost
jaunty angle, unexpectedly
insouciant, neat as his head
this *chapeau melon*—but
not hard enough to shield
your heart-shaped smile,
its curled brim not wide enough
to shelter the outstanding ears.
Jeune premier tuberculeux
with your dark, unequal eyes
so wide apart, you squint,
slightly, to focus them.

Off-balance as your dreamy gaze
beneath the dark, level brows,
your smile is also tilted.
—The photographer, in despair,
has tried to make you
a *fiancé rêvé par Chagall*, and
just a bit cute: but in vain.
We can almost see him now
arranging the pose, bending
the neck but not the will
with the rough firmness of
a village barber, careless
of the palanquin of tears
that the least shock may spill.

—But the high stiff collar
keeps everything in place
and on the level.
For the moment.

James Kirkup

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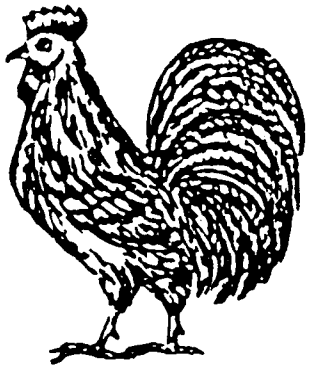
Silence, Exile & Glasnost

A Bilingual Minority—By ZINOVY ZINIK



THERE IS A local legend which can be found in any decent guidebook to Portugal—and my only excuse for quoting it is that it is almost completely unknown in Russia. I mean the legend of the cock whose image in metal, wood and china is to be found on every Portuguese souvenir stall.

A pilgrim, falsely accused of theft while making his way to the holy place, cannot provide sufficiently convincing evidence of his innocence. The local judge, unbending, sentences him to death. In despair the pilgrim calls on God, and declares that as proof of his innocence the roast capon set on a dish before the judge will come to life, and crow. The miracle takes place and the astonished judge not only sets the pilgrim free, but orders a monument to be set up to the cock.

This legend, if not a deliberate parody, is undoubtedly consonant with the biblical confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, when Moses, acting in unison with God, turns Pharaoh's staff into a snake. In both cases life is saved through the miraculous metamorphosis of one object into another, as proof of a Higher Truth and Divine Providence. In the Portuguese legend, however, the monument is erected neither to the judge, nor to the pilgrim, but to the object of the miracle. Would Pharaoh conceivably have put up a monument to the staff that was turned into a snake? The idea is absurd. With or without the Jews, the Pharaohs continued to build their pyramids. What we are dealing with in the Moses story is the Exodus, the saving of an entire nation, the confrontation of culture and religions, while the legend of the pilgrim is the apotheosis of personal salvation—an example of the miraculous ease whereby a thief can be distinguished from an honest tramp. A pilgrim following his purpose in life can, as a matter of course, turn a dead cock into a live one, transform left-overs and bones into a crowing bird.

The difference between Moses's miracle and the Portuguese cock is the difference between religion and literature. Or, to be more precise, between different attitudes to literature and its aims: whether it is to be treated as the journey of a pilgrim falsely accused, or a mission of the chosen to save mankind from bondage in Egypt.

Not long ago I came across an essay by the British writer Salman Rushdie in a 1984 special George Orwell issue of the magazine *Granta*. Rushdie reproached Orwell bitterly for his essay "Inside the Whale", written in 1960. Orwell had suggested (with reference to Henry Miller's descriptions of émigré Paris) that a new era was opening in literature, an era in which the writer would withdraw to the womb, to the belly of the whale—an era when to be apolitical was the only worthy response in an atmosphere of cynical manipulation of such concepts as public duty, conscience, and engagement.

Salman Rushdie accused Orwell of petty-bourgeois escapism, of the TB victim's social pessimism; and, as Mayakovsky had done, he called on today's writers to wield the pen like a bayonet. Perfectly understandably, Rushdie felt nostalgic for an intellectual atmosphere in which literature played a serious social role and a writer's status was not determined by his position in the best-seller lists. Rushdie is trying to place literature on a socio-political pedestal; he is making demands not on literature so much as on his fellow

ZINOVY ZINIK, *born in Moscow in 1945, studied art topology at Moscow University, where he later taught creative writing extension courses. He contributed to the Moscow magazine "Theater", and his criticism and short stories were published in the Soviet press.*

In 1975 he emigrated to Israel and for two years directed a Russian-language student theatre in Jerusalem, while working as a free-lance translator and broadcaster. In 1977 he moved to London (where he now lives) to work for the BBC Russian Service as a theatre critic and feature writer. His essays have appeared in the Paris-based magazine "Sintaksis", and he has contributed reviews and critical essays to London periodicals. He has lectured widely in the USA and Britain, and in May 1988 took part in the Wheatland Foundation international conference on literature in Lisbon, where he delivered the lecture on which his article is based.

The six novels written since his emigration all examine aspects of the "doubleness" of émigré existence. Originally published in Russian émigré editions, a number of them have been translated into French, German, Hebrew, and Dutch. "The Mushroom Picker" was published in 1988 by St Martin's Press and by Heinemann, who will also bring out his latest novel, "The Lord and the Game-Keeper".

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writers, calling on them not only to write novels on socio-political subjects, but also to define their socio-political location, to occupy a clear-cut party position on the ideological front.

Rushdie's appeal is anathema to those who know from their own experience what total ideologisation of literature means. Orwell arrived at this knowledge intuitively, and described it in his essay, giving it a title which refers to the story of Jonah, who ended up inside the whale for ignoring God's ideological directives and refusing to prophesy the fall of Babylon. The events of the last two years give grounds for hope that Soviet Russian literature is more inclined to follow the path indicated by Orwell than the one Rushdie insists on.

> "You see, man doesn't just have a physical side; he's got a spiritual side, too, and he's got—on top of all that—he's got a mystical side, a superspiritual side. So, I kept expecting every minute I'd start throwing up, out there in the square, from all three sides."

These were the words of the hero of Venedikt Yerofeyev's *samizdat* novel, *Moskva-Petushki*. Written twenty years ago, it has been translated into English as *Moscow Circles*, though literally it means *Moscow-Cockerels*. (Moskva and Petushki are two stations on the railway down which Yerofeyev's hero shuttles endlessly.) The title's unintentional pun unexpectedly links the theme of Russian literature with the Portuguese cock.

Yerofeyev's "epic" is the monologue of an alcoholic—a pilgrim of a sort. The hero, constantly trying to complete a pilgrimage to Red Square, never gets further than Moscow's Kursk Station. In the course of his travels *à la* Radishchev[1] from Moscow to Petushki and back, morning-after queasiness intermingles with gruesome details of daily survival in a situation where even a bottle of vodka has not only a physical but also a mystical side. More than that, it has a political one as well.

THIS BOOK circulated in manuscript during the era of *samizdat*, and has long been quarried for quotations which have entered everyday speech. It has given birth to a whole literary movement, and been translated into several European languages. But why did the publication of Yerofeyev's epic in the original Russian encounter insuperable difficulties?

It is not hard to see why the Soviet Establishment should have been hostile, for the striking thing about Yerofeyev's work (and that of his successors today) is a direct flouting not only of the ideological mores of the time, but also of the classic taboos of Soviet literature. His send-up of Party bureaucratic jargon is in the tradition of a previous generation of parodists and absurdists who, disillusioned with the liberal but sermonising literature of the anti-Stalin Thaw, adopted the aggressive, scoffing tones of a streetwise crackpot, disconcerting in its half-foolishness, half-wisdom.

Every epoch has its "nutters". The classic Soviet literary hero, the *intelligent*, had shambled off into literary exile, returning from time to time to play the bogeyman.This hero had been discredited because it was the intelligentsia, with its idealism, its burning debates about the future of mankind, that had been the midwife of revolutionary ideology, and had honed the writer's pen to suicidal sterility by equating it with the bayonet. In an attempt to justify himself in the reader's eyes for his past mistakes, the *intelligent* tried to acquire working-class "street cred" (notice how many *samizdat* authors parade their experience as night-watchmen, loaders, stokers, and lift-attendants), and wanted to show himself as a bit of a nutter who doesn't give a toss for high-minded ideas and complex plots. (Plot is the organisation of heroes according to certain authorial principles. Organisation and principles presuppose ideology, and ideology is precisely what this kind of author is trying to avoid.)

THIS NEW HERO did not speak: he spun yarns as if they were documentary evidence—not in his own voice, but like a jester, a fool making fun of the King's speech, planting pearls of anti-Soviet wisdom (there were such pearls to be planted then) between lines stuffed with parodied Party clichés. But, as in the case of the *derevenshchiki* (the village writers who restored local dialects and generally played the yokel), behind this deliberate or involuntary parody lurked the politically astute enlightener, that same old reformer with a nudge and a wink in the direction of the knowledgeable reader, the same political leader *manqué*. This hero is defined not by what he says, but by the reader's interpretation of his words once the redundant clichés of Party ideology and the ideological perception of life have been turned inside out, destroyed by paradoxical context and spiteful subtext in order to carry out a political hatchet-job on the enemy.

Having understood that parodying the system does not destroy the system, while denying what were at heart the sovietisms of their own speech, some of these oddballs ended their days in the ranks of the *derevenshchiki*, others in emigration.

The difference with Yerofeyev was that he poked and slapped ideological cliché with a gloomy, sarcastic look on his face, and the intonation of a world-weary *intelligent* ridiculing the feeble-minded of this world. To cap it all, the metaphysics of his alcoholic perception of Russia was superimposed on a blasphemously exalted mimicry of the style and tone of the Bible. For almost a decade this was enough to make the émigré Establishment ostracise his book. It was anti-Russian . . . an outrage against all that was sacred to the Russian intelligentsia . . . an insult to "the great traditions and humanistic ideals of Russian literature". In a recent interview in an émigré weekly, Eduard Limonov explained why he had so few hopes of being published in the Soviet Union. He quoted a passage from a work in which he had compared a girl to "a half-chewed meatball". This metaphor, he said, manifested a hatred of humanity, whereas the entire Russian literary public was in favour of humanism. ("Christianity isn't entirely the offspring of

[1] Alexsandr Nikolaevich Radishchev (1740-1802), best known for his *Voyage from Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), in which he criticised serfdom, absolutism in government, and religion. He was exiled to Siberia.

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Judaism, either. There is no misanthropy in Christianity. The Old Testament is impossible to read, of course. It stinks."—Apollon Kuznetsov, Soviet literary critic.[2])

Faith in an exalted destiny for mankind, without God, is a cowardly device for trying to make sense of the utter senselessness and futility of our existence. So is the tendency to look for profound meaning in everything: the hidden, secret meaning, the inside, the lining, the struggle of good and evil, the historic sacrifice. So, too, is the tendency to see in the most banal crimes, or in examples of dirty tricks such as political denunciations, the tragic core of the Russian character, laughter through tears, sado-masochistic insight through suffering, and in general a "symbolic symbol" (to borrow the throwaway phrase of a Leningrad conceptualist who calls himself "Afrika").

Neither the émigré Establishment nor Soviet officialdom could accept Yerofeyev's journeyings from Moscow to Petushki, and for identical reasons: the pseudo- and super-spirituality of Russian literature both "here" and "there" and "from all three sides" made Yerofeyev puke. The public was accustomed to the puritanical, stylistically impeccable intonation of classic Stalinist prose (and of its anti-Stalinist double during the Thaw). It was offended when Yerofeyev supplanted this with a macaronic grotesque, a kind of linguistic lunacy in which Marxist jargon interbred with obscenities, and the intonation of the Gospels was cross-fertilised with alcoholic spew. Here was a delirium comprehensible to a London punk, perhaps, but totally alien to the readers of Gogol and Saltykov-Shchedrin.

TWENTY YEARS ON, there is a new generation of poets and prose writers, not in terms of age, but in terms of names: and they have taken Yerofeyev's tragic grimace—his almost Gogolesque feeling of shame at the intelligentsia's every call to action—to outrageous absurdist lengths. The disparity between declaratory spirituality, idealism, and sublime decorousness in the thinking of these writers' heroes (as "hero" is understood by the Soviet literary mainstream) and their utterly zoological, bestial behaviour, is described in terms that in no way contradicted the moral absolutes so consistently preached by officialdom and dissidents alike.

A good example is "The Opening of the Season", a story by the Moscow writer Vladimir Sorokin. The dialogue of the hunter-heroes, a townie and a local game-warden, as they walk through the forest, parodies the prose of the *derevenshchiki*, those ardent conservationists of the environment and old country customs. At the same time, it refers the reader stylistically to the source of all such motifs in Russian prose—Turgenev's *Hunter's Sketches*. This twin parodic thrust diminishes the polemical subtext. The author is not making fun of the *derevenshchiki*; he is simply resurrecting a particular thought-process, following an honourable literary tradition. Hateful urban civilisation is contrasted with the sacred quiet of nature in what appears at first to be an unexpected, absurdist twist of plot. For, instead of the traditional snare or trap, the hunters hang a portable tape-recorder in a tree, and play songs by a semi-underground bard (a cross between Galich and Vysotsky).

The quarry—a hiker who has become separated from his group—immediately takes the bait. Suddenly the macabre dénouement dawns on the reader. The two conservationist comrades are not after woodcock, they're after people. They are catchers not of human souls, but of human flesh: in a word, cannibals. The story ends with the heroes' detailed and lyrical ruminations on which parts of the skinned corpse should be cooked immediately, and which can be left for supper. Sorokin has presented a case not of moral hypocrisy, but of moral schizophrenia.

The most astonishing thing about this story is that the author has totally distanced himself. He does not wink at us, as Yerofeyev does, from behind the mask of parody, hinting to the informed reader that beyond the theatricals of this horror, behind the scenes, lies another world—one that is rational, good, and eternal. For the new generation has serious doubts whether such a world exists; it is a generation of political pessimists. Whatever reforms may be taking place in society, the man of the word has understood that his role in *perestroika* is that of someone performing in a play. The role is active only in so far as he, as an actor, can inflame the audience with his words. He has no right to join in the enthusiasm of the audience, and change from actor to political activist, since he would then have to quit the stage and lose his status as one of the exalted, the select. He would become one of the multitude. These days, however, such detachment is not enough to save him. The Soviet theatre no longer lives by Stanislavsky's law of "the fourth wall" as it did in the Stalin epoch. We are in Pirandello's theatre, where at any moment the stage can extend into the auditorium, turning the audience into actors while the actors join the crowd of gawpers (in so far as a crowd is an accumulation of people, each of whom believes that all the others, himself excepted, are part of the crowd). Then comes the moment when the new boundaries of the stage are announced, and we can pretend we are the actors and all the rest the crowd—until the next redistribution of roles takes place, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Nevertheless, this relativism in the perception of auditorium and stage does not negate the theatre's claims to objectivity, to apoliticism, to non-interference. The theatre, so the argument runs, by juxtaposing words and gestures, motives and deeds, merely displays a picture of life. It does not claim to judge who is right and who is wrong; it distributes neither reward nor punishment. In a theatre where the actors are also part of the crowd, a part of life, it is possible to believe that everything is created by the people themselves and is not the creation of the actors in the play.

To be *and* not to be: that is the answer of Hamlet the man of words to Hamlet the man of action. This illusion of neutrality has allowed Soviet theatre to exploit the fruits of the present liberalisation more quickly and seriously than other forms of literature. It is not just a question of receiving permission to stage previously banned works, not just of the appearance on stage of previously banned characters or sub-

[2] The interpolated quotations in this article are taken from contributions to a meeting of the Readers Club of the Moscow monthly *Nash Sovremennik (Our Contemporary)* in 1988.

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jects. It is a question of restoring whole layers of language, of the spoken word, without any kind of moralising, no exposure of doublethink and hypocrisy, tearing off of masks, no planting of historical truth between the lines of *Pravda*—all that has been the hallmark of theatre from the 1960s up to the present day. ("It's not the work of freemasons we see here, but satanists. The theatre has been taken over by satanists"—Valentin Rasputin, Soviet writer.)

Exposing and combating doublethink in society has, from Orwell to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, presupposed political optimism, faith in the possibility of change. The previous literary generation had split down socio-political lines, into officialdom versus dissidents. But when doublethink ceased to be a means of survival and became a way of life, when the fission of thought was comparable in intensity and universality to the atomic fission in the Chernobyl chain-reaction (though no chains are needed to sustain this mental fission), the division of literature into "underground" and "official" from a political point of view became thoroughly misleading.

Political pessimism is, to a large degree, the touchstone of literary optimism. Civic duty shifts from the category of the necessary to that of the imaginary. Political doublethink—associated with a tendency to foist unnoticed on the public (or to conceal) certain "progressive ideas"—has for the new literary generation become doublethink in stylistic perception of the literary process. These writers suffer from bilingualism of literary thought.

ACCORDING TO Marina Tsvetayeva, all poets are Yids. Political minorities were supplanted in literature by stylistic minorities, from whose perspective a masterpiece of the Stalin epoch and an anti-Stalin epic are literary twins. Today's author, however, has no desire to fraternise with anybody, and in the company of his established brothers of the pen he feels, if not exactly a Yid, then certainly a distant cousin. Of course, like any national minority that feels itself chosen by God, the author is a tyrant at heart and secretly dreams that the entire world will come to accept unequivocally *his* vision, *his* ideas, *his* literature—even if only temporarily, while reading his words. He is aware, none the less, that whatever happens he is on his own in a hostile environment, if only because it does not speak his language.

Both the pro-régime and the dissident literary mob (unlike the traditional mob which drove the poet into his costly ivory tower) are alike these days in denying the poet the right to solitude. They persist in claiming the role of intermediary between the poet and God. Until such time as people of the pen grasp the fact that literature is authorship, not a political platform or a pulpit, Orwell's solitude "inside the whale" will be mistaken for loneliness.

This does not mean that a writer cannot become a politician or a preacher, or vice versa. Nor does it mean that literature must always be apolitical. Simply, political or religious ideas in literature are just that: ideas. And these ideas are character-bound; they change from plot to plot, from author to author, from generation to generation.

Ideas are, in short, merely a part of the stylistic whole, and they change in the same way that the lifestyle of any living, thinking society changes. Individualistic in spirit—for literature is the moral justification of egoism—this style resists any kind of generalisation, be it for geography or political régime, wherever the division of the world into democratic and totalitarian, socialist realist and post-modernist, Lies and Truth (literary truth does, in fact, sometimes consist in telling a lie) serves as excuse for literary stagnation.

EACH OF US has his silence and his *glasnost*. It is sad when *glasnost* in an alien language, in the language of the crowd surrounding you, means that once again you must fall silent. The *intelligent* as literary hero began to demonstrate the absence of *glasnost* by disappearing from literature, by a demonstrative silence which is symbolic in the same way as the political protest of a decade ago, when a handful of dissidents led by Alec Volpin gathered in Moscow for a "Meeting of *Glasnost* By Way of Silence", as the participants called it. On Constitution Day (the Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom of speech) they assembled at the Pushkin Monument, took off their hats, and stood in silence. Some people reckoned they were silent in order to resist the provocations of the security police, and that taking their hats off was a mark of respect for Pushkin (or vice versa).

The secret of the symbolism of that demonstrative silence will soon be lost forever: for the *intelligent* has rediscovered, at least for the time being, the gift of speech. It is now the crowd that is silent . . . . We all hope it won't end in cannibalism.

Prose is a compromise between the intimacy of silence and public *glasnost*, between private conversation and the language of the mob. The writer is by nature a bilingual minority, in a crowd of the like-minded. And this bilingualism—in the sense of contrasting and co-existing styles: colloquial and literary, from the street and the salon, official and dissident, the language of the emigration and the language of the motherland—has always been, and remains, a mark of literature's restoration to health.

There was a similar bilingualism in the 1920s, during the metamorphosis of the language into Soviet Russian, and during Khrushchev's Thaw with the birth of *samizdat*. We were there in the 1970s, during Russian literature's pilgrimage from the city into the countryside and then into emigration, where the prose writer has to live in constant confrontation with a second, foreign, language—the language of the country where he has settled. There is nothing particularly original about this situation. We should bear in mind the bilingual experience of Turgenev, for instance, and the whole traditionally "translated" character of Russian literature—starting with the translations of Zhukovsky and Pushkin, which became an integral part of Russian literature.

Rehabilitating this bilingual nature of literature presupposes the restoration to their rightful place of all the "minor", "experimental", "alternative" genres and styles. This presumes in its turn a rejection of any hierarchical "table of ranks" according to literary seniority, any imperial division of literature into "metropolitan" and "provincial"—

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with a consequent political ranking based on the naive assumption that literature has its centre where political power lies, and not the other way round. (It would be hard to describe Washington, D.C. as the literary capital of the United States.)

Of course, the rehabilitation of literary minorities in Russian letters bears no comparison with the decentralisation of English literature into its dozens of genres and regional literatures, including the patois of former colonies. All the same, recent changes can be taken as a sign that the classic question whether there are one or two Russian literatures (the literature of the motherland and of the emigration, of dissent and of officialdom) can be answered thus: there is not one, nor even two, but a multitude of Russian literatures. To which category, then, do my novels belong, fully comprehensible as they are only to a reader who has intimate experience of life both "here" and "there"? ("And those people who have abandoned the motherland, to whom it matters not where they live, have no right to offer anything to the people"—Apollon Kuznetsov, literary critic.)

THE TENDENCY to universalise, to centralise, to push a general line in literature forced the older members of the Third Wave of émigré writers to keep one eye always on what was happening in Moscow. They were unwilling to be regarded as a minority, and so their writing and that of their predecessors did not seek to follow Vladislav Khodasevich's advice to "become émigré".[3] Because of this refusal to reflect the émigré existence, there is no such thing as Russian literature in emigration. Literature survives, thank God, because of exceptions, and writers like Vladimir Nabokov and Georgii Gazdanov only proved the rule. There are more such exceptions among writers of my own generation.

But the ideologists of the Russian emigration, instead of understanding their new freedom empirically, without the usual paraphernalia of external enemies and scourges, immediately invented a new set of enemies and scourges. All too soon they had become senile, tedious pensioners, indistinguishable from their spiritual opponents in Moscow. At the precise moment when liberally-minded editors of Soviet magazines were putting their lives on the line in their efforts to publish Brodsky's poems, the émigré Politburo took the time and trouble to set in motion a second show trial of Andrei Sinyavsky, publicly questioning the integrity of a man who had paid the price of prison and personal ruin in order to win the right of every Soviet writer to publish abroad.

If one is to judge the achievements of a national literature by the quantity and scale of its moral victims and spiritual bankruptcies—which is how we have come to judge Russian literature—then the last two years have been rather productive. Charity and tolerance (and even, on occasion, downright indulgence) on the part of the authorities and the élite have led to a situation in which a whole range of themes—from Pavlik Morozov and genetics to the Doctors' Plot and the Gulag—has seen taboos cease to be the stuff of literature. These themes are now openly accessible. They have become the property of the masses.

Stripped of their moral authority as voices crying in the wilderness, as lonely prophets of doom, the authors of books on forbidden themes have acquired a mass readership. To be more exact, this mass readership has come out of the closet. They have become book-buyers, so turning authors of "underground" literature into official best-sellers. I am referring here to the authors of prose epics about the intelligentsia and the authorities at times of social catastrophe, be it the struggle of Right-wing opportunists with Left-deviationists during the Stalin years, or the corruption of the working class and the peasantry at the hands of cynical, denim-clad townies during the Brezhnev stagnation.

That type of didactic thrust is, of course, no worse than any other. The good thing is that it is losing its moral superiority as the only literature which, in Stalin's words, is "loyal to the cause, and therefore true literature". It is finding its place as simply another genre, and no longer squeezes other literary practices out of the limelight. On top of all that, legitimation of "dissident" themes has finally removed the artificial crown of thorns from those émigré authors who felt morally superior simply because in exile they could raise their voices with impunity on the superiority of parliamentary democracy over Stalinist terror.

Yet another "major" literary theme has been debunked, thanks to the loosening over the last three years of the boundaries between the emigration and the motherland. For the first time since the 1920s and the "Change of Landmarks" movement[4] (unlike the present generation, they were prepared to swear loyalty to the régime), émigré authors—mostly from among those who were widely published in the USSR before emigrating—have been appearing in one or another context in the Soviet press.

BUT THE NUB OF the literary changes, as always, lies not so much in removing the blinkers of censorship as in shifts in accustomed habits of thought. During the past two years, Soviet borders have opened to readmit hundreds of émigrés who left the Soviet Union legally in the 1970s—in other words, the bulk of "Third Wave" émigrés. Although still off-limits for émigré literature, Moscow has ceased, at least for the moment, to be a world where shadows flit and whence are borne the sepulchral voices of abandoned friends. Moscow is no longer a metonymy: it has become geography. The Iron Curtain is gradually slimming down to the size of an air ticket, and this ticket to the past has put paid to a whole range of topics beloved of émigré commentators.

That does not mean that the émigré novel as a drama of

[3] Vladishav Khodasevich, one of the post-Revolutionary wave of emigrants, was a leading figure in Russian émigré Paris before World War II, and was widely respected for his neutral stance. One of the early members of the Symbolist movement, he was the first to recognise the talent of Vladimir Nabokov.

[4] A group of Russian émigrés in 1920s Berlin, who preached cooperation between émigré circles and the Soviet literary Establishment. They believed that patriotism should take precedence over opposition to the régime.

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the fission and juxtaposition of two worlds—of the past and the present in geography, politics, time, and language—has lost its topicality or its attractiveness. Probably the reverse: when the deed is done, there is time for words; and the theme of emigration can now acquire purity as a literary genre, freed of documentary polemicising and apocalyptic pathos.

For the first time in Soviet history no one is punished for writing anything that comes into his head, or even for publishing wherever he wishes. If nowadays a writer does not publish abroad, it is because he prefers to wait until he can be printed in *Novy Mir*, taking his turn behind a long queue of Nobel Prize winners, both living and dead (Brodsky and Solzhenitsyn, Bunin and Pasternak). Of course, centralised state publishing in the Soviet Union and centralised émigré publishing abroad have both led to falsely exaggerated reputations, as well as to careers crippled by obscurity. But the experience of literature in the emigration is now being understood in Moscow. The wretched state of Russian literature on both sides of the divide can no longer be written down to the machinations of *Glavlit* and the *KGB* "over there", or to a mystic conspiracy of Lefties who have infiltrated the press and publishing houses "over here". For the first time, perhaps, the literary process in Russia has ceased to be a matter of the proceedings of criminal law, and the new course of this process depends on the state of mind of its participants—not on censorship, but on self-censorship.

One of the forms of self-censorship is a misconceived loyalty to tradition. We have still not rid ourselves completely of the passport system in literature: people are admitted to the Writers' Union these days with no fewer and possibly more caveats, enquiries and references than in the time of all the *Chekas*, Star Chambers, RAPPS, *Glavlits*, and so on. Former prisoners (Bulgakov and Nabokov, Zamyatin and Platonov, Akhmatova and Pasternak, etc.) have, like the émigrés and exiles beyond the Iron Curtain, been rehabilitated *en masse*, and returned to the present in multi-million editions. Just imagine what English literature would look like if James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, Ezra Pound, Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawence suddenly appeared in the bookshops after being banned for years . . . .

English literature has only recently recovered from the destructive influence of Joyce. A similarly negative effect is now being exercised on Soviet poetry by Joseph Brodsky. With the long, free, English sweep to his lines, his almost conversational, hypnotic intonations, and his seemingly free rhyme schemes, Brodsky has liberated Russian verse to such a degree that every other adolescent depressive has discovered English poetic intonations, and imagines himself an outcast in his own land. Even Brodsky's Jewish lisp has become fashionable in the Russian outback. In prose, Stalin takes on a demonic image borrowed from Bulgakov, while Andrei Platonov's syntax—convoluted, enigmatic, and totally beyond the categories of class—has found its way into the mannered monologues of the salon *intelligent*. A Nabokovian, stylised, émigré intonation suddenly appears in the work of *Komsomol* writers just as John Dos Passos's collages and Joyce's stream of consciousness, discovered after half a century, washed over the shores of émigré literature.

This kind of stylistic borrowing from tried and tested names is nothing other than an involuntary urge towards hierarchy and respectability. Russian literature has always had a weakness for this, and the result has invariably been comic, like the dispute 100 years ago between Aksakov and Turgenev—was Gogol's work like Mayne Reid's or more like Sir Walter Scott's? There are too many generals at today's wedding of Russian literature to freedom. The presence of so many celebrated, bemedalled, grizzled guests forces callow youth to maintain a respectful silence during the feast or to play along, adapt their speech, and suck up to "the oldies" during the literary table-talk.

A CERTAIN MYSTERIOUS distance separates a private letter from the page of a novel, a distance whose boundaries and bridgeability no one can ever feel sure of. But any writer knows very well that the smaller this distance, the more freely literature breathes. Real movement forward in literature is a movement towards freedom; towards what one might call a lack of style; towards indifference to literary device (which is by definition secondary as a train of literary thought) and to all those conventions which give literary pride of place to narrative, along with the "big" themes and general ideas which provoke such predictable enthusiasm on the part of the public. To quote Vladimir Nabokov, ". . . critics cannot discover general ideas in a particular writer for the very simple reason that the writer's concrete ideas have not yet become general".

General ideas are the business of philosophers, and the proclamation of ideals is the business of public figures, not writers. This is a lesson we have taken to heart, though we have not rid ourselves yet of a certain spiritual deference to our elders. We are, of course, no longer so narrow-minded and blinkered as to demand public statements of writers, but it always helps to take out additional insurance—perhaps in the form of a pronouncement about cultural bonds when "the times are out of joint", or borrowings from Platonov or Bulgakov (as from Kafka twenty years ago), of a quote from Nabokov, of the reputation of having met Nadezhda Mandelshtam or of being a pupil of that obscure prose writer, Paul Ulitin.

Jews are forbidden to utter the name of God. Perhaps that is why the Old Testament still retains its vitality not only as a social and religious document, but also as a literary one.

During this new period, possibly one of the most liberal in Russian letters, we must rehabilitate not only certain specific names, but whole layers of literary and colloquial speech. We must be ready to accept outsiders and outcasts—the ugly ducklings—into the monolithic family that Russian letters has always been; to accept, even if we do not understand, a different and alien literary thought-process. The chance pilgrim should not be forced to prove his innocence, to transform cold left-overs into a crowning cock at every turn of the road. It is a land without hope that has room only for miracles; and a doomed literature that has no room for outcasts.

Translated by Frank Williams

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THEATRE

Volpone & The Miser

The Classical Tradition

By Malcolm Rutherford

IT WAS a coincidence, I suppose, that Molière's *The Miser* and Ben Jonson's *Volpone* should have been showing in London at the same time, and that Corneille's *The Liar* should have been on only a few weeks before, all at different theatres. Yet perhaps the coincidence means that something in the collective mind has been stirring. For here we are back with 17th-century drama —English and French—and remarkably playable it turns out to be.

Someone must have commented on this before; but, if so, I have failed to find the reference. Jonson's *Volpone*, subtitled *The Fox*, could conceivably have been written by Molière or Corneille. Equally, Jonson could have written *The Miser*. Part of the explanation is obvious. Jonson was the English dramatist who most clearly followed the classical tradition and observed the unities of time, place and action—a tradition to which the French stuck after most English writers had abandoned it. Jonson and the 17th-century French dramatists, therefore, were in the same mould. There has always been an English view that Racine, Corneille and Molière would have been greater playwrights had they not been rooted in the classical strait-jacket. What we are seeing now is that there is a lot to be said for that discipline, and that it is not nearly as inflexible as has been supposed.

It is easy to forget how high Ben Jonson's reputation once was. The introduction to the Everyman edition of his *Complete Plays*, published in 1910, begins:

> "The greatest of English dramatists except Shakespeare, the first literary dictator and poet-laureate, a writer of verse, prose, satire, and criticism who most potently of all the men of his time affected the subsequent course of English letters: such was Ben Johnson."

In their *History of English Literature*, first published in 1926, the French critics Legouis and Cazamian noted:

> "His lengthy career as a dramatist (1597-1633) . . . the numerous allusions and satirical portraits in his plays, his expositions of theory, and his sarcastic references to his public, perhaps make him, rather than Shakespeare, the rightful centre for a study of Renaissance drama."

And, to go back to Everyman: "There was no man in England of his rank so well known and universally beloved as Ben Jonson."

That does not sound like the Jonson we have known of late. Perhaps he is making a comeback. The most important fact to remember is that he was not like Shakespeare, though there are inevitable overlaps, as indeed there are with other English dramatists of his time. Jonson thought Shakespeare undisciplined. The more appropriate comparison is between Jonson and the French.

The technique is simple enough. You take a single idea, wrap it round a single, dominant character, then you can throw in as much social observation, satire, stage business and farce as you like. The other characters are subordinate, but not insignificant. They can be good parts to play, but they do not, on the whole, take on a life of their own. They must not get in the way of the single idea. The trick is to do it well.

Volpone and *The Miser* make an easy comparison, for they have the same idea at base. Volpone is almost as much a miser or hoarder as Harpagon (the miser in the Molière play). But there the resemblance stops. Harpagon is just a miser. He tries to conceal the wealth he has, sometimes denies that he has it, and would not even spend it for his own pleasure—he dresses in rags. Volpone is just as rich, and he would never willingly part with his money, if there were no return. Yet the key to his character lies elsewhere. His delight comes from duping other people. He is not above being self-indulgent with his wealth. When he attempts a seduction, he offers to shower his riches on the lady, Celia, not in any show of ostentation, but because he thinks that is one way to win her. Harpagon would never do a thing like that. When he wants to marry, he is interested mainly in the dowry. Still, both plays are about money and the power that it brings.

AN OBSESSION with wealth by no means inhibits the imagination; nor does it limit the force of the verse. There are passages in *Volpone* which immediately bring to mind the slightly earlier plays of Christopher Marlowe: *Tamburlaine* or even *Faustus*. Volpone says at the beginning:

> *Yet I glory*
> *More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,*
> *Than in the glad possession, since I gain*
> *No common way; I use no trade, no venture;*
> *I wound no earth with plough-shares, fat no beasts*
> *To feed the shambles; have no mills for iron,*
> *Oil, corn or men, to grind them into powder:*
> *I blow no subtle glass, expose no ships*
> *To threat'nings of the furrow-faced sea;*
> *I turn no monies in the public bank,*
> *Nor usure private.*

He might have added:

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Is it not passing brave to be a Fox,
And lurk in triumph through Persepolis?

Volpone and Tamburlaine admire wealth in the same way. It equates with power. Tamburlaine is a show-off; Volpone is not, except sometimes in private. Tamburlaine rides in triumph, Volpone lurks, but it is manifestly the same genre. Equally, Volpone, feeling wanton and lascivious, could well have called for a wife, just like Faustus. He would certainly have called up Helen of Troy if he had known how to do it, and addressed her in verse quite as striking as Marlowe gave to Faustus.

The versions played in London in April took considerable liberties with the original texts. *Volpone* at the Almeida Theatre omitted one pair of characters altogether: the Englishman Sir Politick Would-Be and his wife. The version of *The Miser* at the Young Vic wanders about between verse and prose, whereas Molière wrote *L'Avare* as a prose play. None of the liberties in either production, however, seemed to be against the original spirit. It was part of the nature of Jacobean drama that scenes could be written in, not necessarily by the main author. Equally, they could be left out at no great loss, and possibly at some gain to coherence. The character of Sir Politick Would-Be, and perhaps particularly of Lady Would-Be, almost certainly had some satirical significance at the time. They may even have been instantly recognisable to Jonson's audience. But they do not affect the main thrust of the play. Today it is quite right to cast them aside.

As a result, we are left with the essence: Volpone, the fox who leads other people on, though he traps himself in the end, and the vultures who are after his wealth. Three of them are actually named after birds of prey: Voltore—the vulture, Corbaccio—the old crow, and Corvino—the little crow. There is also Mosca—the fly. Mosca is Volpone's valet (or parasite), who carries out and even invents the dupes, and eventually seeks the inheritance himself. Jonson would have no difficulty in recognising this as the play he wrote. Nor could he have objected that the production played down the verse. The ability to speak good verse is a crucial part of Volpone's character. It sets him aside from the rest, shows that he is more ambitious—just like Tamburlaine. At the Almeida, it was well-spoken when it needed to be.

YET THE main reason for the success of *Volpone* and *The Miser* today is the realisation that they are plays for actors. Volpone is a marvellous part; so is Harpagon. I have rarely seen in successive weeks actors so much enjoying themselves on stage, and so much aware of their spell over the audience. There is a scene in *The Miser* where Harpagon appeals directly to the audience for sympathy. The part was played by Roy Marsden with an almost 90° stoop: when he leans towards the audience, the stoop is almost greater and the sympathy is nearly forthcoming. Ian McDiarmid played Volpone with the total self-confidence of someone who knows what a good part he has. He moved from hypochondriac to sexual athlete within a second. Volpone has a spell as a quack doctor (Dr Scoto of Mantua) purveying pills in the market-place: McDiarmid wallowed in it. English acting has always been very good, sometimes better than the material warranted—but here you had the parts spurring the actors on. A line or two in *Volpone* suggests, for example, that the physical relationship between Mosca and Volpone could be quite close. Early in the play Volpone says: "My beloved Mosca." After one of their successful dupes, he says: "Come hither, let me kiss thee." In the Almeida production, he did kiss him, smack on the lips. That is almost certainly not what the original text intended, but it was a liberty worth taking, and it worked.

The Almeida and the Young Vic are very similar kinds of theatre: fringe-ish and financially precarious, primitive in their facilities, though possibly they rejoice in that, and staging plays, if not in-the-round, about three-quarters so. Why they should have hit on 17th-century drama at the same time is unclear. It is also a mystery why their productions do not move on elsewhere. They do not have to be done on a shoestring. *Volpone* was sold out within a day or two of the first reviews, which suggests that Jonson could again command the wider, popular audience he once had. *The Miser*, at the Young Vic, was staged a couple of hundred yards away from the more affluent Old Vic, which had just had a great success with *The Liar*. Again, there appears to be no connection.

I SHALL END, however, with a censure. Some aspects of the Almeida production of *Volpone* were ridiculous. Because the play is set in Venice, it was decided to surround the rim of the main stage with water. That meant that the players had repeatedly to tramp through it, and that anyone sitting in the front row had to be provided with tarpaulin covers to preserve them from the splashing. A decent actors' union would have objected to the working conditions. Apart from the fact that it was insanitary, the water added nothing to the play. Nor did an elaborate, labour-intensive system of pulleys, designed to show that the Almeida could raise and drop scenery, almost as in an opera house.

That was perversity. Still, if you go to see the English National Opera's production of Verdi's *Macbeth* at the Coliseum, you will understand that perversity nowadays starts at the top. For no comprehensible reason, Macbeth and his supporters are dressed in what looks like Nazi military uniform, and the blood of the murdered King Duncan is coloured green. It does not on the whole distract from the music, but it does raise the question of why, when you have a good product, you have to throw in unnecessary gimmicks. The Almeida would certainly be even better without them.

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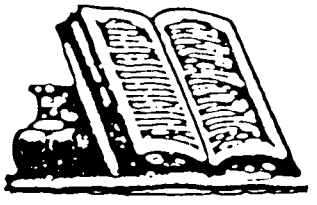
IN THE MARGIN

The Idea of Community

By Anthony Hartley



MANY ARE those who, from platform or pulpit, in speech or leading article, plead for the restoration of "a sense of community". It is one of the most widely used contemporary phrases, but also one of the least well-defined. *The Oxford English Dictionary* divides the meanings of "community" into two distinct categories, referring to its abstract ("the quality of appertaining to all in common") and its social sense. Its use in an expression like "a sense of community" lies within the second group of definitions: "a body of people organised into a political, municipal, or social unity." Significantly, the example illustrating this use refers to "those little communities . . . called Neighbourhoods (1711)".

For at the back of the mind of most people who use the word "community" seems to lie an idyllic image of some small town or village where everyone knows everyone else, and a helping hand to one's neighbour is part of the normal give and take of social life. It is a society where the pressures of social opinion and the constraints of family life keep black sheep from straying, and a word from the friendly village policeman is enough to put the fear of God into any budding juvenile delinquent. This rose-coloured picture is, of course, a myth—as anyone who has read *The History of Myddle* or *Akenfield* will know. Too often, "a sense of community" in the English countryside was based on isolation, a restricted range of opportunity and the burdensome imperatives of the agricultural year. Hatred of a neighbour or relative existed alongside mutual assistance. As novelists like Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells and Upton Sinclair have told us, small-town existence was petty, hypocritical and merciless to deviants from the social norm. "Community" was often felt as oppression, and much progressive writing in the 19th and 20th centuries was devoted to telling us so.

Since then opinion has suffered a sea-change, and there is a call for the reimposition of social fetters by many of those who, for years, were exhorting everyone who would listen to cast them off. The original campaign was very successful, as the present proliferation of "rights"—workers' rights, women's rights, black rights, schoolchildren's rights, animal rights—shows. All these bear testimony to the successful assertion of a special interest against social habit or majority opinion—an assertion often justifiable in terms of the issues raised, but also tending to produce a fragmentation of the community which it is now fashionable to lament. For a century-and-a-half individuals in Britain and America have known a gradual liberation from the pressures exerted by social opinion. This expansive freedom has left every individual with the pleasing sense of being his own society, faced only by a benevolent or coercive state bureaucracy. The "community's" hidden hand no longer intervenes to correct or influence the behaviour of individuals with the strength it once possessed.

The disintegration of society received a powerful impetus during the 1960s. It was then that easier divorce and abortion, militant feminism, permissive education, and a purely hedonistic conception of sexual relations began to diminish the family as the basic social unit. At the same time, the attack was stepped up on the remnants of a hierarchical society, the objects of respect and repositories of exemplary authority. The cry, loudly uttered by the new industry of satire, was for a more egalitarian, more meritocratic society, freed from the constraints of traditional behaviour.

In the next two decades the political world responded to this change in the *Zeitgeist*. Margaret Thatcher created an egalitarian Conservatism which enjoyed unexampled success for an entire decade. Neil Kinnock, too, has tried to free the Labour Party from its own, somewhat different hierarchies—trade-union officials and Left-wing activists—and make it something in which the ordinary citizen can play a part. Both party leaders are populists. Yet, paradoxically, the very voices that used to send up the old ways are now raised to express their dislike of the new egalitarianism. There is nostalgia for the old Tory paternalism, the colonels and knights of the shire, from the people who were eager to get rid of them. Nor does it seem likely that, were Labour in power, the liberal intelligentsia would find much to admire in Mr Kinnock's new look.

IN HIS RECENT book *The Unprincipled Society* (1988), David Marquand (who is far from being among the admirers of the new egalitarianism) addresses these changes in the social climate and poses the question "How can a fragmented society make itself whole? How can a culture permeated by possessive individualism restore the bonds of community?" Perhaps the short answer to this is that it cannot; or that, at the very most, it would take decades to rebuild what it took a century-and-a-half to destroy. For we are talking here about massive long-term changes in belief and custom. What has happened is the result of a gradual erosion of an ethical and social consensus and of the disappearance of religious belief, which once gave transcendental backing to such sentiments as charity and unselfishness. A "sense of community", with its overtones of rational, utilitarian behaviour, was kept alive by irrational, but compelling, beliefs, which, together with the impetus they once imparted, have been slowly running down. The command to "Love your neighbour" is more easily obeyed when it is backed by an assurance of the love of God or, at least, by confidence in an ordered universe which reinforces psychologically the impulse towards altruism. To make men behave benevo-

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lently it is not enough to appeal to their reason; their feelings must also be involved.

Considerations like these show how great the task of "restoring the bonds of community" will be. Professor Marquand does not underestimate the size of the issues he has raised, and it is hardly surprising that he has little to offer in the way of a solution—who, after all, has done better? He pins his hopes on an unstructured, but hopeful, process of mutual education:

> "The alternative rests on a richer, more complex and in some ways more generous view of human nature and human possibilities, but it is not, for that reason, easier or more comfortable. . . . At its core lies the belief that men and women may learn if they are stretched; that they can discover how to govern themselves if they win self-government."

SOCIAL LIFE ORGANISED as a perpetual seminar might indeed increase the flow of sweet reason, though this is less than certain. But the question is how to restore the instruments of social control which urge us towards good deeds and restrain us from bad? We know what has happened to organised religion, and humanistic ethics seem likely to follow Christian into dissolution. The family is undermined by divorce, which has a particularly destructive effect on the psychological and financial ability of the poor to cope with their problems. Schoolmasters are no longer willing to take responsibility for the moral welfare of their charges. Social workers accelerate family decline by trying to substitute their own efforts for those of the parents. Self-discipline is imparted only at work, and the lessons learned there—sobriety, punctuality, application in carrying out a given task etc.—are at odds with those gathered from the society of leisure, the generalised hedonism presented by advertising and the media. The '60s had a hand in spreading a crude version of Freudianism, whose message was that self-expression was good for you. Why not loot a shop during a riot if you feel like it? Or bash a policeman? Or defraud the tax collector? Or travel to the further shores of sexual oddity, though, as in Baudelaire's *Cytherea*, torture and death may await the voyager:

> *Dans ton île, ô Vénus, je n'ai trouvé debout*
> *Qu'un gibet symbolique où pendait mon image . . . .*

From this chaos of conflicting desires and remnants of past belief can anything be salvaged to serve the idea of community? For, in so far as this is something more than a simple preference for redistributive taxation, it must imply a minimum of common belief and some degree of conviction in the acceptance of a general code of ethics. On what elements can these be built?

BANAL though the remark may be, the only materials available are to be found in the private lives of ordinary people. Of these, the family forms the most important part. If other West European countries, such as France or Germany, appear more orderly than Britain and the United States, it is not because of the nature of the continental political state. It is because the decay of the family as a social unit has not gone so far.[1] There, to a large extent, the family still fulfils its original function as a refuge and a social security system. Individuals can cope more easily with the changes of modern industrial society if they are supported by a family network. Moreover, the common concerns of families—care for children and the home, concern for education—provide links which still exist across the barriers of class and different levels of income.

It is curious how this considerable fact can be missed by those who, it might be thought, were best fitted to understand it. Educators do not much like having to bring parents into their councils and social workers seem prepared to ride rough-shod over parental rights.[2] When, for instance, the parents at Cardinal Vaughan Catholic school in central London voted "to opt out" of the local authority's (and the diocese's) educational system, they were described as "selfish" by Cardinal Basil Hume. Yet it was they who possessed a "sense of community" and not the educational bureaucracy. Of course, parents are sometimes prepared to be selfish on behalf of their children. Luigi Barzini once wrote that the Italian family is "a fortress" from which its members emerge to pillage the surrounding countryside. The disadvantages of this become clear, if family is written with a capital F. None the less, such a bias is generally a useful phenomenon, which helps to spread common values through society.

What is nowadays called "possessive" or "acquisitive" individualism is also often associated with mere greed or selfishness, coupled with indifference to the plight of others. It is very easy to sneer at the home-owner who is proud of his or her furniture and new carpets. But the desire to improve one's environment is not an ignoble one and is far from materialist in its motivation. It stems from an aesthetic sense and serves as a useful, and harmless, form of self-expression. A "do-it-yourself" decorator or gardener gets a creative satisfaction out of the work he does on house or flower-beds—a satisfaction which he might not find easy to gain at work. To create a small "paradise" to suit one's tastes and please one's eye is an ambition which deserves better than a sneer. It is one way of giving meaning to life, and those who despise it as "bourgeois" or "selfish" or "materialist" show little comprehension of the psychology of human beings, who have always required for their contentment "a local habitation and a name". G. K. Chesterton had a surer instinct when he wrote of the romance and glory of surburban life.

The opposition between a "possessive" society and "a

[1] In Britain, however, we tend to exaggerate the degree to which continental countries are socially more stable than ourselves. In terms of, say, racial unrest, France and Germany have their own problems.

[2] It is terrifying to see how accustomed poor parents have become to being the object of arbitrary decisions. When, in Yorkshire recently, paedophiles knocked on a number of doors, representing themselves as coming "from the council" and demanding "to examine" a young child, few parents questioned their right to do so. Bizarre behaviour is expected from officials of the welfare state.

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sense of community" is, therefore, not as absolute as it appears in Professor Marquand's argument. An individual house-owner, satisfied with the continuity of possession and occupied with the improvement of his or her environment and the care of a family, is the strongest foundation on which society can be based. Nor was Locke wrong in associating property with political freedom. Property and family ties create a series of stable units out of which a *polis* can be built. Such units are not "atomistic"; rather the concerns and activities which are common to them all provide bridges between them. The sum total of such contracts makes up private life and spills over into public policy, if its issues impinge on a sufficient number of individuals.

WHEN, HOWEVER, representatives of the Churches and other publicists talk of "a sense of community", they have in mind something rather different from these common habits and concerns. They wish to bring home to the man in the street his responsibility—and eventually his guilt—for all that has gone on in the society to which he belongs. And if that society contains relatively little in the way of crying wrongs or gross injustice, then his responsibility can be widened—become, indeed, world-wide. As a member of an industrial society, he can be held to account for world hunger, the destruction of the rain forests and the existence of Latin-American dictatorships. The more he obeys the injunction to search his conscience, the more strange beasts he will find there. It is all a little like the moral blackmail applied in childhood—"Eat up your pudding, dear, there are poor Chinese children who would be glad of it!" Justice was done to such global extension of the individual's humanitarian duties by Macaulay in a speech delivered in 1845:

> "I do not say that we ought to prefer the happiness of one particular society to the happiness of mankind; but I say that, by exerting ourselves to promote the happiness of the society with which we are most nearly connected, and with which we are best acquainted, we shall do more to promote the happiness of mankind than by busying ourselves about matters which we do not fully understand, and cannot efficiently control."

However benevolent people's instincts may be, most of us habitually lack the imagination to place ills which we have not encountered on a par with those which are familiar to us. Common experience arouses our sympathies; appeals to prevent far-off catastrophe do not, unless accompanied by some fortuitous circumstance—a harrowing report on television or a charity appeal by a pop star—which brings them into sharper focus.

When, therefore, we talk of restoring "a sense of community", we had better stick to the experiences which arise from the everyday concerns of individuals. Too often the phrase is used in a way that implies the need for some form of inner conversion, quasi-religious in nature. For most of us this is not going to occur, and, were it to do so, it might well take new and unsuspected religious forms, which would probably be unwelcome when they manifested themselves. Those who wish to suffuse present-day British society with a new sense of solidarity must first accept it is as it is, with its yuppies and its yobbos, its modest desires and limited altruism, and with many activities where unselfishness and self-aggrandisement mingle and lose their identity.

Equally, the exhortations of political activists to reconstitute a community must be suspect. For their concern is to create something that can be manipulated for their own ends and justify their claim to represent their fellow citizens ("The community is us!"). But a community of committees and caucuses has none of the life inherent in organic social bonds. As Lord Hailsham once wrote: "The man who puts politics first is not fit to be called a civilised being, let alone a Christian." It is not in such conventicles that "a sense of community" is born. It is rather in the daily lives of ordinary people, whose common habits and opinions form the bonds between them. Moreover, it is not clear that such ties are capable of being strengthened by any preaching of their desirability or assigning them into categories such as "selfish" or "altruistic".

I ONCE TOOK PART in a seminar where an American bishop denounced skyscrapers for breaking up the community and contributing to the emptying of parish churches. To this a brilliant French geographer, Jean Gottmann, replied with a defence of the Pan-Am building, and then asked the bishop whether he had ever thought of taking a floor in a high-rise building as a church, which would be available to the thousands of office workers using it.

This silenced the bishop, but, high-rise buildings apart, the moral of the anecdote seems to be that, before talking about the need to restore "a sense of community", a more profound analysis is needed of the opportunities afforded by contemporary society for the reinforcement of social links through habit and use. For there is no point in simply complaining about the characteristics of advanced industrial society. These are here to stay, but any examination of them will reveal a number of areas where we might reasonably expect the growth of a common social interest. Such growth is bound to be fragile, and the interruption or erosion of many traditional instruments of social integration show how hard it is to propagate habits of cooperation in a society subject to rapid change in response to economic and technological transformations. The primacy of economic considerations and the desire to effect a modest improvement in their own financial position will remain a dominating theme for most people. But, as Dr Johnson said, "There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money", and there is a streak of generosity in a consumer society which is worth attention.

We are going to continue to be "possessive individualists". But rather than regretting this or turning back to past models of community, we should be looking to the future and working with the grain of history rather than against it. In this context it will be the individual who will have to adapt to the new society and make something of it—an adaptation that can be aided through self-education and self-discipline. Since he has been deserted by the collapse of traditional authorities, he is on his own. But then perhaps he always has been. No amount of talk about "community" can alter that.

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LETTERS

Stent's Paradox

PROFESSOR Gunther Stent is, of course, quite right to draw attention ("Can We Explain the Mind?", ENCOUNTER, March 1990) to the incompatibility between the concept of free will and the "attribution of causal necessity to nature". And he is also correct in stressing the point that we cannot afford to abandon either idea.

Happily, the paradox is less of a practical problem than we might expect it to be. This is because physical causal happenings are inevitably experienced ("seen") as external phenomena, and brain/mind events are not seen at all. Thus there is virtually no *conscious incompatibility* between necessity and morality. However much causal necessity may impinge on—or contradict—moral responsibility, it is not felt or perceived to do so; and in practice it is the feeling of moral responsibility which colours our perception of daily life. Whatever the force of the real contradiction it remains somewhere at the edge of things. Keeping both balls in the air at once is, in point of fact, not too difficult.

M. A. TATHAM

Little Odell
Bedford

Hartley's "Wall"

WHAT A refreshing change seems to have come over your editorial policy with the superb article by Anthony Hartley, "And the Wall Fell Down" (January-February 1990). Perhaps I am prejudiced because Mr Hartley's analysis so closely echoes my own views.

Just about the only thing I don't agree with in the article is the footnote (no. 2 on p. 6) which credits Ronald Reagan's policies of "Star Wars" and support for the Afghan *Mujaheddin* for the change in Soviet attitudes. "Star Wars" was a joke used to con the American public into supporting the huge expenditures for the "military-industrial complex". It has never been a serious, nor even a practical solution to the alleged Soviet threat. And proposing that Reagan's policy in Afghanistan had anything to do with the Soviet decision to pull out is akin to crediting the Soviets with the American embarrassment in Viet Nam. Both were "no-win" situations and should not have been indulged in in the first place. Or perhaps even Reagan now deserves credit for the upset of the Sandinista government in recent elections in Nicaragua?

Conspicuous for its absence in this issue of ENCOUNTER is any comment by Jean-François Revel. Is he now too busy revising his *How Democracies Perish* for a new edition? One that might accommodate the amazing changes that are taking place in this new world? And Mel Lasky, where are you? After all the years of neo-conservative Soviet-bashing, can we now count on your counsel for prudence?

EUGENE SCHULMAN

Geneva

ANTHONY HARTLEY writes: It is the situation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that has changed rather than ENCOUNTER's policies. As for the part played by Mr Reagan's "Star Wars" project, it seems clear that the economic strain of competing with the United States in an arms race did help to convince the Soviet leadership of the need for change in foreign policy. "Star Wars" was simply a further element in that pressure. After all, however "real" or "unreal" it may have been, the Russian General Staff could not take the risk of its being a success.

Teaching "Western Culture"

IN WRITING as a university teacher of humanities in America, the late Sidney Hook ("Is Teaching 'Western Culture' Racist & Sexist?" in ENCOUNTER, September-October 1989) raises a number of issues that are also of professional concern to me as a school teacher of English in England. I think it would be fair to summarise Hook's defence of the traditional curriculum as follows:

1. For much of the past, literacy, and hence culture, was the monopoly of the élite classes.

2. Most Western students, because of their own culture, can get inside these texts in a way that they could not do easily with texts from different traditions.

3. The traditional curriculum does not impose a monolithic political message, because texts conflict with each other and readers are free to dissent from authors' views.

4. Texts are selected not because of their political effects (which are unpredictable) but because they are "the best or most appropriate for the subject in hand" (namely humanities, not sociology, politics etc.). Thus they are selected on apolitical grounds: they have been influential, have been found to be stimulating and challenging, have helped to form (and hence help to explain) today's culture.

5. We need to be clear about how we use ambiguous words such as "reflect" and "political".

I would agree with much of this and believe that it forms a valuable defence against barbarians. My strongest doubts, however, are as follows.

1. Hook fails to distinguish between certainties and probabilities. Of course it isn't certain that a traditional curriculum won't produce a Marx or a Fanon. But what does it *tend* to produce? Does it not tend to have predictable political consequences? (Isn't Simone de Beauvoir more likely than Jean-Paul Sartre to produce feminists?) If not, how can it be argued that abandoning this curriculum will have such lamentable political consequences?

2. Hook is inconsistent. He implies that "the subject in hand" legitimately includes inquiry into "the influence of political decisions in the past on the ideals and models conceived to represent the best and most enduring in art and literature." Now it would be odd to study this by concentrating solely on texts that are canonical, rather than also studying texts that, say, feminists have argued have been undeservedly lost or suppressed. The latter course, however, requires that female authors start to appear on the curriculum.

3. Hook's grounds for selecting texts are liberal in the best sense. Nevertheless they are narrow. They are strong on the past, less strong on the present, and weak on the future. What about parts of our culture that can't be accounted for by reference to established texts? What happens when today's readers report that the texts that they most recognise themselves in or use to live by happen to be by authors who are black, female, or working-class? (I am reminded of Raymond Williams's assertion that, when he arrived in Cambridge, England, from a vibrant popular rural culture, he was forever being told, on the basis of the traditional canon, that this culture "had died".) What about the way that Richard Wright, say, or Maya Angelou broadens the experience of a white bourgeois male such as myself? What about the feminist novelists seeking to give their readers visions and myths from which to gain the strength to dream of a better future? In selecting texts, then, let us recognise the three functions of providing (*a*) a sense of identity and personal significance; (*b*) a sense of future possibilities; and (*c*) vicarious experience. Since some texts by black authors (and working-class and female ones) fulfil these functions excellently and since it is implicit in Hook's article that we should no more exclude than include texts because of "the race, or sex, or class, of the author", the curriculum needs to be reformed.

4. Hook proposes to use "political" to refer to "the public and legislative forum" and not to the selection of the humanities curriculum. Fine. If anyone

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continues to support the exclusion of black, female, or working-class authors despite the above, I need no long disagree with their politics. Only their values.

5. There is one advantage of using "political" to refer not only to the "public and legislative forum" but also to more private and everyday matters such as the question of which texts to study. The link is provided by the notion of world-view or ideology. I would agree with Hook that this link is not a matter of *logic*; nevertheless, it exists. Moreover, it has enabled a body of subtle, scholarly and sensitive criticism to be produced. The work of John Barrell, for example (*The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 1980; and *Poetry, Language and Politics*, 1988), seems to me to show how political matters such as land ownership, enclosure, and the condition of the rural poor may be related to the detail of syntax, grammar, diction, composition and facture in the works of 18th-century writers and painters. Such writers (Raymond Williams is another), to paraphrase Hook's quotation of Lynn Cheney, "view humanities texts as though they were primarily political and show how truth and beauty and excellence must be regarded as relevant and how questions of aesthetic and intellectual quality may not be dismissed. . . ."

In the process, Hook's clear distinction in subject-matter between humanities and subjects such as sociology and politics becomes very muddy. Texts can be literary and political (and sociological) simultaneously. Good: authors such as Burke should not be the subject of demarcation disputes between academics.

ANTHONY HAYNES

Newmarket

"The Brotherhood"

AS A FRESH subscriber to ENCOUNTER may I congratulate you on a number of articles published in recent issues of the magazine against the backdrop of the momentous international socio-political events of our times?

I refer to those essays reflecting on the quandary and confusion in which those events have (or should have) plunged many prominent Left-wing luminaries of the era. The warped outlook that has sadly characterised their thinking, and which has so tragically failed five generations of the impressionable and ideal-hungry young, impels me to reflect that the thinking few who have resisted in their time the facile attractions of the failed myths of our century belong in fact (in a humble way) to a kind of ancient "brotherhood" of lay votaries, personified, *in excelsis*, by Charles Péguy, that luminous Frenchman who, at the beginning of this century, had railed at what he had perceived as the "*trahison des clercs*" of all persuasions. Thus in *Notre Jeunesse* (1910) Péguy writes:

> "When one sees what clerical politics have made of the Christian mystique, how can one be surprised by what radical politics have made of the republican mystique? When one sees what the clerics have made of the saints, how can one be surprised by what our parliamentarians have made of republican heroes? When one sees what the reactionaries have made of saintliness, how can one be surprised by what revolutionaries have made of heroism?
>
> The veritable traitor in the full sense of the word . . . is he who sells his soul, who delivers his very being, who loses his soul, who betrays his principles, his ideals, his very being, who betrays his mystique to enter the corresponding politics, the derivative politics, glossing complaisantly over the point of discrimination."

On these vibrant words "the brotherhood" has rested its case.

MAURICE J. COHEN

London

From Guizot to Thatcher

SINCE both your Co-Editors are francophone, it cannot be by mistake that Mrs Thatcher is said on p. 39 of the April number to have proclaimed "*enrichez vous*". Mrs Thatcher may have certain failings—and notably the suicidal folly of the Poll Tax—but she cannot surely be accused of speaking such bad French.

MAURICE CRANSTON

London

ED. NOTE: The famous phrase of Guizot's in mid-19th-century French politics should have read: "*enrichissez vous*".

Irony, Geniality & Malice

SO LONG AS Maurice Cowling deals in political philosophy, he is free to juggle concepts or words as he pleases. But when he purports to write contemporary political history and a history of ideas, he is bound by their canons to base his assertions on verifiable empirical fact. In references to me in his ENCOUNTER article, "The Sources of the New Right" (November 1989), he fails to do so. Cowling writes:

> "It is certain, however, that the Centre for Policy Studies was invented by Lord Joseph (and Mrs Thatcher) as a makeweight to the Conservative Research Department after Mr Heath's first general election defeat in 1974, that its public purpose was to proclaim Capitalism's superiority over Socialism, and that the original intention was to start with a "great debate" in the Albert Hall between Lord Joseph and Mr Michael Foot."

Not a word of this is true. I was the first person Lord Joseph consulted regarding the Centre's foundation—before he invited Mrs Thatcher to join as vice-chairman—and I have kept all our minutes (of which copies are deposited with the History Department of Bedford and Royal Holloway New College, London).

WE STARTED OUT to change the Conservative Party's approach, hence our primary aim was not to wean Socialists away from socialism but to wean Conservatives and other non-Socialists away from the corporate state and Keynesian panaceas, which had helped bring about the Heath débâcle. All our speeches and publications of the time make this clear. Our second major aim was trade-union reform. The idea that we aspired to a public debate with Michael Foot is sheer fantasy.

Our point of departure was the perception that "Butskellism" had failed in terms of its own criteria and objectives; we offered explanations and policy implications. We were not "New Right", however Right be defined. Those of us who had formerly been Socialists, Labour supporters, or Butskellites became "newly Right", joining forces with those who had held comparable views longer. But I never regarded the modern Conservative Party as a success story.

At no time did we even consider acting as a "makeweight" to the Conservative Research Department, whose functions were totally different from our proposed organisation's, and rarely overlapped with them. The CRD serviced Shadow Ministers, committees, and other Party bodies. Our aim was to change the climate of opinion. They had several dozen executives; we intended to have at most three. Cowling has uncritically reproduced media malice and back-room gossip.

Keith Joseph's Birmingham speech was not at all "Eysenckian"; Cowling's use of the term makes me wonder whether he troubled to read it for himself or simply relied on second-hand, biased reports. The phrase which attracted hostile comment and deliberate misinterpretation was a quotation from a Left-wing publication noting that most poverty was generated by "fatherless families" headed by mothers from "classes IV and V". Joseph had quoted this in previous articles and speeches without eliciting comment.

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When the *London Evening Standard* misrepresented him, he panicked instead of fighting back, though he received sackfuls of supporting letters. It was this incident which persuaded him that he lacked "a certain robustness" necessary for political leadership.

I HAVE AFFECTION and gratitude for Colin Welch (and for the *Daily Telegraph* that was), but it is wholly untrue that I "moved via [them] to Lord Joseph . . ." with whom my continuous relationship antedates my *Telegraph* connection. It is untrue that we took over authors from the Institute of Economic Affairs (only three out of our dozens of publications), or "much of what they had established or sought to provide". The IEA was well-established, much larger and richer than we were; we could never have dreamed of doing what they did nearly as well as they did it. Nor did we attempt—as Cowling asserts—to provide a moral justification for economic theory, preferring to trace causal connections. (I write from a full dossier of all our publications.) We concentrated on case-studies in contemporary economic history, demonstrating that intervention had been counter-productive by any criterion. What can one make of the following gibberish?

> "But really everyone agrees—apart possibly in their differing ways from Scruton, Casey, and Sherman—that, though doctrine matters, the Conservative Party should not wish to be either doctrinaire or authoritarian."

Instead of speculating on what I think, the would-be contemporary historian or journalist must go to the documents—or simply ask me. I should have told him that his statement or question is meaningless. The Conservative Party is an electoral organisation more concerned with *votes* than with *views*. Doctrine in economics and social affairs implies a coherent conceptual framework relating cause and effect. Any government, party, or school of thought which preaches or practises massive state intervention must *ex hypothesi* be guided explicitly or implicitly by some doctrine relating desiderated ends to means chosen. We brought implicit ideas into the open. I personally expressed scepticism regarding economists' claims to predictive and prescriptive powers (see my article, "Economic Doctrines, Political Dilemmas", in ENCOUNTER, December 1988).

Maurice Cowling should know better than to claim that the Salisbury Group was founded by Diana Spearman and the Marquess of Salisbury. It was founded by Diana Spearman, the Hon. Robert Wills, and me. We then sought the Marquess's patronage and recruited members, including Maurice Cowling, who actively intrigued to squeeze me out and launch a vendetta against Keith Joseph. The campaign, with its ugly personal overtones, waved the banner of a shabby-genteel reproduction "High Tory" philosophy, which denounced the Market and all its works as furiously as did the socialists. Though it claimed British antecedents, it owed more to the Old Right's National Economics in 19th-century Germany and Austria-Hungary.

ALFRED SHERMAN

London

Bombs for Victory

"NOBILITY AND WAR" by John Grigg (in the March 1990 issue of ENCOUNTER) lacks historical perspective and is heavy on poetry.

He states that in World War II for two years the British war machine (we assume the RAF) was directed not against the armed forces of the enemy, but against unarmed civilians. The facts are that those civilians included a million able-bodied male fire-fighters and 600,000 crews of the 300,000 heavy guns, which, if these had been placed on the Moscow Front after 1941, would have sliced through to the eastern gates of the Russian capital.

A letter from a Mr Nussbaumer, general manager of the *Schweizerischer Bankverein* of Switzerland, to Sir Stafford Cripps in June 1942 (quoted in the 1984 book "*Bomber*" *Harris* by Dudley Saward) states that "as regards transport, the Germans were short of 15,000 locomotives and 250,000 waggons. . . . The shortage of waggons was evidenced by the traffic of 120 trains per day which normally passed through Switzerland. Previously these had consisted of fifty to sixty waggons whereas now they had been reduced to thirty-five to forty per train". Another critical shortage was of lubrication grease. Civilian morale, Nussbaumer asserted, was very low in facing the bombing.

Matthew Cooper in *The German Air Force: An Anatomy of Failure* (1981) describes the break in the morale of Goebbels and Goering after the destruction of Lübeck resulting in incoherence in the highest office of the *Luftwaffe* and the HQ stacked with junior officers with command insignia. For three weeks no supplies were shipped from Lübeck to the Russian front. Furthermore, the total electrical supply for the region was destroyed and the city failed to act as an economic and military supply base against the Russians.

As a non-commissioned navigator of RCAF-RAF (106 squadron of 5 Group in the shadow of the "Dambusters"), I can recall one thousand operations of Bomber Command of military importance. I do know that the bombing from 1942-44 destroyed the transport system of the German Empire. The dropping of mines in the seas and rivers of Europe, without killing the women and children, reduced the supply of aluminium, copper, and alloy metals to a trickle. My only regret is that Churchill's advisor, F. A. Lindemann, failed to recognise an opportunity to destroy the electrical generation and distribution system of Europe that might have brought victory in weeks as early as mid-1943. It is a fact of modern-day life that no military power can exist without electricity.

GEORGE A. COLLINS

Lynden
Ontario

A Reader's Farewell

WITH REGRET, I have to inform you of my decision to cancel my subscription to ENCOUNTER as from April. As a faithful reader, I would like to add a few remarks to your editors.

For 29 years, as from 1961, I was a —sometimes admiring—subscriber of your magazine. I keep a series of yearly volumes of ENCOUNTER in my study. I consider this collection as a significant documentary file. In this, a Western European reflection can be

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found, in my opinion, of all important cultural, literary and political currents and events in the world during the last three decades.

You occasionally arranged critical international discussions on key issues, such as European Integration, the Student Revolts of the late 1960s, Thatcherism, "Star Wars", and many more. You sometimes helped to discover new literary talent. You coined certain new political terms. Your impartiality, or rather your critical approach, was not impaired in the '60s by your then CIA subvention: I remained faithful to you through that period.

With the recent near disappearance of Marxism and Communism as serious political contenders, one of the aims for which your magazine was originally founded seems to have evaporated. Your current editorial formula, however, as a critical monthly review of current affairs, literature and the arts, seems to me to remain fully valid.

Some of my friends remark that your magazine seems to turn more and more conservative with time, and this is only to be expected from largely senescent editors. I cannot quite deny this, but I realise that the same observations apply to me. I am a Dutch national, aged 72. During the War, I spent three years in Dachau. After liberation, I worked in Indonesia for five years, first as colonial administrator and later as adviser to the Indonesian government.

I first saw ENCOUNTER in 1960 in Bogota, while visiting an American friend. I lived and worked there for four years as adviser of the United Nations to the Colombian government. During the eight years of my stay in Morocco (1961-68) ENCOUNTER was one of my links with Western culture. In later years, during short professional visits and consultancies to over 20 developing countries in Asia and Africa, I always carried one or two ENCOUNTER copies with me as off-duty reading material.

My reasons for cancellation are in part financial; in part lack of time (I also have subscriptions to *The Economist, Scientific American*, and to several professional developmental periodicals); in part the realisation that my mental absorption capacity and absorption speed are diminishing with age.

My wife and I will miss you, all the same.

H. DE MEEL

The Hague
Netherlands

AUTHORS

W. W. Rostow's article in this issue is based on a paper he delivered at Boston University's recent Sesquicentennial Conference. The proceedings of the Conference—on searching for an appropriate "Metaphor for our Times"—will be published later this year, edited by President John R. Silber who invited several dozen writers and intellectuals (Peter Berger, Bernard Levin, Hugh Thomas, Melvin J. Lasky, *et al.*) for a "Conversazione". . . .

Nabil Naoum, who was born in Cairo in 1944 of Christian Coptic parents, studied civil engineering at Cairo University and later worked as an engineer in and around New York. Since returning to Cairo, he has devoted himself to writing. His work does not exist within any given tradition of Arabic writing, and he cites as his main literary influences a strange trio: the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges, the Japanese Yasunari Kawabata, and the Moroccan-based US writer, Paul Bowles. Nabil Naoum's publications include a short mystical novel, *al-Bāb* (*The Door*, 1977) and a collection of short stories, *'Ashiq al-Muhaddith* (*The Lover-Narrator*, 1984).

John Greening has published two volumes of poetry—*Westerners* (Hippopotamus Press, 1982) and *Winter Journeys* (Rivelin Press, 1984). His latest collection, *The Tutankhamun Variations*, will be published in June by Bloodaxe Books.

Roy Kerridge, who writes a fortnightly column, "In the City", for *The Independent*, is the author of *Druid Madonna* (1983); his non-fiction work about West Indians in England, *Real Wicked Guy*, was followed by *Bizarre Britain: A Calendar of Eccentricity* (1984), and *The People of Britain* (Robert Hale, 1987). His latest book, *In the Deep South*, was published in 1989 by Michael Joseph, who next year will bring out *Jaunting Through Ireland*.

David Stove is a lecturer in the Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy at the University of Sydney, and author of several works including *Popper and After* (1982), *Rationality of Induction* (1986), and *Cole Porter and Karl Popper, and other Reputations Re-Considered* (Bradford Books/MIT Press, 1989). He is currently preparing a book of essays on Enlightenment themes in which his article on contraception, "The Diabolical Place: A Secret of the Enlightenment" (ENCOUNTER, May 1990) will appear.

Anna Adams's collections of poetry include *Dear Vincent* (Littlewood Press, 1986), *Trees in Sheep Country* (Peterloo Poets, 1987) and *Angels of Soho*, with pictures by Norman Adams (Royal Academy, 1988). Her third collection of poetry from Peterloo Poets, *Nobodies*, was published in May.

Robert Shannan Peckham, who is presently at the University of Thessaloniki, has written on Modern Greek and Russian literature. He was awarded a Peter Kirk Scholarship in 1988 to study Orthodoxy. He contributes to numerous periodicals, and reviews regularly for *London Magazine* and *Books*.

Edward Norman is Chaplain of Christ Church College, Canterbury. His latest book, *The House of God: A History of Churches*, will be published in the autumn by Thames & Hudson.

Oliver Knox is the nephew of the late Monsignor Ronald Knox who wrote a translation of the Bible from the Vulgate (published in 1955). He has written four novels and one travel book (*From Rome to San Marino in the Steps of Garibaldi*). He is currently Director of Publications for the Centre for Policy Studies.

Geoffrey Partington was born and educated in what is now Greater Manchester. He taught in grammar and comprehensive schools, was Head of a secondary modern and an Adviser to a Local Education Authority, and since 1976 has taught in the School of Education of the Flinders University of South Australia. His books include *Women Teachers in the Twentieth Century* (1976), *The Idea of an Historical Education* (1980), and *What Do Our Children Know?* (1988).

George Dalos is a Hungarian writer who lives in Budapest and works in Vienna.

Malcolm Rutherford is Assistant Editor of the *Financial Times*.

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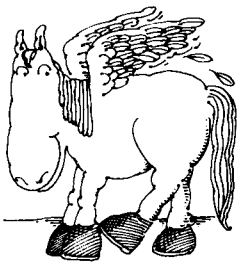
Life & Letters Today

London



CRYING WOLF: *A survey shows that most children who know the "Red Riding Hood" fairy tale are on the side of the wolf. This is apparently down to their concern over the extinction of wild animals. They think Red Riding Hood was irresponsible to take a short cut through the woods and that the grandmother deserved to be eaten. Only 27.3% of the little mites thought the wolf was bad, and one in twenty thought he was very nice.*

Next, I suppose [writes Keith Waterhouse] we will learn that Hansel and Gretel are despised by young readers for eating bits off a marzipan house which everyone knows is bad for the teeth and stuffed full of cholesterol to boot. Jack and Jill, instead of falling down hills with pails of water, should have stuck to Perrier.

I think all this revelation proves is that, as a rule, fairy tales are more reliable than surveys.

DAILY MAIL

Valletta

CATHOLICITY: **The Maltese language has something for everybody [writes Ronald Payne]. The lingua-mix was demonstrated as I wandered around Valletta with the Maltese poet Charles Flores. Effortlessly he greeted friends with "*Bonjour*" in Marseilles-type French. The politenesses ended with "*grazzi, ciao*" in the tones of Naples. In between came a phrase or two in English such as "nice day", and a spurt of Maltese, itself a *mélange* of Latin and old Arabic roots.**

To get white coffee ask for *cafe halib* (Arabic for milk). So strong is the Arabic element that when Christians pray to God in this devoutly Catholic country, the only available word for addressing the deity is Allah.

EVENING STANDARD

Washington, D.C.

DOG DAYS: *Revenge is sweet and smells of mustard and sauerkraut. Julio Martinez, forced out as New York State's commissioner of drug treatment, has parked his new hot dog cart under Governor Mario Cuomo's office window. Martinez, who quit the commissioner's job after accusations that he had steered drug-treatment money to friends, insists he is not trying to embarrass Cuomo by selling hot dogs and knishes outside the Capitol. "This is my livelihood", he says. "I'm calling myself the knishener."*

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Nottingham

FUNDAMENTAL VEGETABLES: **The curious phenomenon of God's name appearing in Arabic inside aubergines has spread from Nottingham to Leicester, where three cases have been reported by devout Muslims in one week. As many as 5,000 pilgrims from all over the Midlands are reported to have visited the remarkable vegetables.**

One, sliced twice, shows the Arabic characters for Allah repeated three times; the other appeared to contain a verse from the Koran, though this has not yet been deciphered.

"It's quite clear", one witness said. "You don't even have to have a magnifier. Everyone who has been round to see it and pay their respects has said it's a message that it's going to be the end of the world or whatever. To have this written in a fruit or vegetable is a miracle."

A Race Relations representative noted: "The fact that certain configurations can appear to read as the word Allah should not surprise anyone because Allah's ways are very mysterious."

THE INDEPENDENT

Nottingham

FOLK LAW: *A brochure alleging that Robin Hood and Maid Marian never met was withdrawn by Nottingham City Council recently in the wake of protests that it damaged tourism.*

However, the affair took another turn when it was alleged by a local historian that Maid Marian was a prostitute. At a press conference in Mansfield (which claims Robin was a citizen of the town), Mr Jim Lees, aged 76, said: "Robin and Maid Marian were together for many years but never married. When times were hard I believe she became a prostitute."

As for Robin Hood, he has run into more trouble. A week after Nottingham Council issued the brochure exploding the legend of the Sherwood Forest outlaw, the city's "Home Brewery" announced plans to drop him from its emblem. A spokesman said: "The old logo did not do us justice."

THE TIMES

London

QUOTEMANSHIP: **Mr Neil Fletcher, the Labour leader of the Inner London Education Authority, caused a stir at St Paul's Cathedral when he stood up to read the lesson at a farewell service for the Authority, which Mrs Thatcher has abolished.**

Instead of the passage from St Luke's Gospel which he was appointed to read, he launched instead into his own prankish selection of verses from Isaiah:

> **"Woe to those who make unjust laws. . . . Woe to you O destroyer. . . . Come here you sons of a sorceress."**

With her Methodist upbringing, Mrs Thatcher can no doubt manage her own Biblical counter-attack. One of the passages she might care to consider, however, is Chapter 2 of the Second Epistle of Peter:

> **"There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies . . . and bring upon themselves swift destruction. . . . But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities . . . they speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption."**

DAILY TELEGRAPH

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Cover illustration from *Lord Dismiss Us*

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—*New York Times Book Review*

And in Phoenix Fiction

Lord Dismiss Us

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